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T H E
W O R K S

Of the Most Reverend

Dr. John Tillotson,

L A T E

Lord Archbishop of C A N T E R B U R Y.

V O L U M E the T H I R D.

C O N T A I N I N G

Two Hundred Sermons and Discourses,

O n S E V E R A L O C C A S I O N S:

To which are Annexed,

PRAYERS Composed by him for his own Use;
A DISCOURSE to his Servants before SACRAMENT;
And a FORM of PRAYER, composed by him, for the
Use of King *William*.

Published from the Originals

By *RALPH BARKER*, D. D. Chaplain to his Grace.

Together with T A B L E S to the Whole:

*One, of the Texts Preach'd upon;
Another, of the Places of Scripture occasionally Explain'd;
A Third, An Alphabetical Table of Matters.*

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OF EACH
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S E R M O N C V.

The Necessity of Repentance and Faith.

A C T S XX. 21.

Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

TO have seen St. Paul in the Pulpit, was one of those three things which St. Augustine thought worth the wishing for. And sure it were very desirable to have seen this glorious Instrument of God, who did such Wonders in the World, to have heard that plain and powerful Eloquence of his, which was so mighty thro' God, for the casting down of strong Holds, and the subduing of Men to the Obedience of the Gospel; to have beheld the Zeal of this holy Man, who was all on fire for God, with what ardency of Affection, and Earnestness of Expression, he persuaded Men to come in to Christ, and entertain the Gospel. This were very desirable; but seeing it is a thing we cannot hope for, it should be some satisfaction to our Curiosity, to know what St. Paul preached, what was the main Subject of his Sermons, whither he referr'd all his Discourses, and what they tended to. This he tells us in the Words that I have read to you, that the main Substance of all his Sermons was *Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The Occasion of the Words was briefly this; St. Paul being in his Journey to Jerusalem, and intending to be there by the Day of Pentecost, that he might not be hindred in his Journey, he resolves to pass by Ephesus, and only to call to him the Elders of the Church, to charge them with their Duty, and the Care of the Church; and to engage them hereto, he tells them how he had carried and demeaned himself among them, v. 18. with what Diligence and Vigilance he had watched over them, with what Affection and Earnestness he had preached to them, v. 19, 20. And here in the Text he tells them what had been the Sum of his Doctrine, and the Substance of those many Sermons he had preached among them, and what was the End and Design of all his Discourses, viz. To persuade Men to *Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; testifying both to the Jews and Greeks, &c.*

I shall explain the Words a little, and then fix upon the Observations which I intend to speak to, because I design this only as a Preface to some larger Discourses of Faith and Repentance.

For Explication. *Testifying*, the Word is διαμαρτυρομεν, which signifies to testify, to prove a thing by Testimony; so 'tis used, Heb. ii 6. *But one in a certain place testifieth, saying.* In Heathen Writers the Word is often used in a Law sense, for contesting by Law, and pleading in a Cause; and from hence it signifies, earnestly to contend or persuade by Arguments and Threatnings. In the use of the LXX, it signifies to protest, to convince, to press earnestly, to persuade. It is used most frequently by St. Luke in a very intense Signification, and is sometimes joined with exhorting, which is an earnest persuading to a thing, Act ij. 40. *And with many other Words did he testify and exhort, saying, save yourselves from this untoward Generation;* and with Preaching, Acts viii. 25. *And when they had testified and preached the Word of the Lord;* and so Acts xviii. 5. *Being pressed in Spirit, he testified to the Jews, that Jesus was the Christ.* Being pressed in Spirit signifies Intention and Vehemency in testifying to them, that he did vehemently endeavour to convince them; it seems to be equivalent to the Expression, v. 28. where it is said, *Apollos did mightily convince the Jews that Jesus was*

the Christ; that is, did use such Persuasions and Arguments as were sufficient to convince; and to mention no more, *Acts xxviii. 23.* He expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus.

St. Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy, useth this Word in a most vehement Sense, for giving a solemn Charge, *1 Tim. v. 21.* I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ; the Word is διαμαρτύρομαι; and so *2 Tim. ii. 14.* charging them before the Lord, that they strive not about Words; and so *2 Tim. iv. 1.* I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ; and here in the Text the Word seems to be of a very high and intense Signification, because of the Circumstances mentioned before and after; he tells us before, that he taught them at all Seasons, *v. 18.* publicly, and from House to House, *v. 20.* And afterwards at the *31. v.* that he warned them Day and Night with Tears. So that testifying to the Jews Repentance and Faith, must signify his pressing and persuading of them with the greatest Vehemency, to turn from their Sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; his charging on them these things as their Duty, his pleading with them the Necessity of Faith and Repentance, and earnestly endeavouring to convince them thereof.

Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ: What is the Reason of this appropriation of Repentance and Faith, the one as properly respecting God, and the other our Lord Jesus Christ? I answer. Repentance doth properly respect God, because he is the Party offended, and to whom we are to be reconciled; the Faith of the Gospel doth properly refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the chief and principal Object of it; so that by testifying to them Repentance toward God, &c. we are to understand that the Apostle did earnestly press and persuade them to repent of their Sins, whereby they had offended God, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Messiah, the Person that was ordained of God, and sent to be the Saviour of the World.

From the Words thus explained, this is the Observation that doth naturally arise,

That Repentance and Faith are the Sum and Substance of the Gospel; and that Ministers ought with all Earnestness and Vehemency to press People to repent and believe, to charge them with these as their Duty, and by all means to endeavour to convince them of the Necessity of them.

In the handling of this I shall do these two Things.

First, Shew you what is included in Repentance and Faith, that you may see that they are the Sum of the Gospel. And,

Secondly, Shew you the Necessity of them.

First, What is included in these.

I. Repentance; this properly signifies a Change of Mind, a Conviction that we have done amiss, so as to be truly sorry for what we have done, and heartily to wish that we had not done it. To repent, is to alter our Mind, to have other Apprehensions of things than we had, to look upon that now as evil, which we did not before; from whence follows Sorrow for what we have done, and a resolution of Mind for the future not to do again that which appears now to us to be so evil, that we are ashamed of it, and troubled for it, and wish we had never done it. So that Repentance implies a Conviction that we have done something that is evil and sinful, contrary to the Law we are under, and those Obligations of Duty and Gratitude that lie upon us, whereby God is highly provoked and incensed against us, and we in danger of his Wrath, and the sad Effects of his Displeasure, upon which we are troubled, and grieved, and ashamed for what we have done, and wish we had been wiser, and had done otherwise; hereupon we resolve never to do any thing that is sinful, that is contrary to our Duty and Obligations to God, and by which we may provoke him against us. These two things are contained in a true Repentance, a deep Sense of, and Sorrow for the Evils that are past, and the Sins we have committed; and a firm Purpose and Resolution of Obedience for the future, of abstaining from all Sin, and doing whatever is our Duty; the true Effect of which Resolution, is the breaking off the Practice of Sin, and the Course of a wicked Life, and a constant Course of Obedience.

II. Faith in Christ is an effectual believing the Revelation of the Gospel, the History and the Doctrine of it; the History of it, that there was such a Person

as

as Jesus Christ, that he was the true *Messias*, prophesied of and promised in the Old Testament, that he was born and lived and preached, and wrought the Miracles that are recorded, that he was crucified and rose again, and ascended into Heaven, that he was the *Son of God*, and sent by him into the World, by his Doctrine to instruct, and by the Example of his Life to go before us in the Way to Happiness, and by the Merit and Satisfaction of his Death and Sufferings, to appease and reconcile God to us, and to purchase for us the Pardon of our Sins and eternal Life, upon the Conditions of Faith and Repentance and sincere Obedience; and that to enable us to the Performance of these Conditions, he promised and afterward sent his Holy Spirit, to accompany the Preaching of his Gospel, and to assist all Christians to the doing of that which God requires of them; this is the *History* of the Gospel.

Now the *Doctrine* of it contains the Precepts and Promises and Threatnings of it, and Faith in Christ includes a firm Belief of all these; of the Precepts of the Gospel as the Matter of our Duty, and the Rule of our Life; and of the Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel, as arguments to our Duty, to encourage our Obedience, and deter us from Sin. So that he that believes the Lord Jesus, believes him to be the great Guide and Teacher sent from God, to bring and conduct Men to eternal Happiness, and that therefore we ought to hearken to him and follow him; this is to believe his *Prophetical* Office. He believes that he is the *Author of Salvation*, and hath purchased for us Forgiveness of Sins, Ransom from Hell, and eternal Life and Blessedness upon the Conditions before mentioned, and therefore that we ought to rely upon him only for Salvation, to own him for our Saviour, and to beg of him his Holy Spirit, which he hath promised to us, to enable us to perform the Conditions required on our Part; this is to believe his *Priestly* Office. And lastly, He believes that the precepts of the Gospel, being delivered to us by the Son of God, ought to have the Authority of Laws upon us, and that we are bound to be obedient to them; and for our Encouragement, if we be so, that there is a glorious and eternal Reward promised to us; and for our Terror, if we be not, there are terrible and eternal Punishments threatened to us: to which Rewards, the Lord Jesus Christ at the Day of Judgment will sentence Men, as the great Judge of the World; and this is to believe the *Kingly* Office of Christ: And this is the Sum of that which is meant by *Faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ*, which the Apostle saith was one Subject of his Preaching.

And the proper and genuine Effect of this Faith, is to live as we believe, to conform our Lives to the Doctrine, to the Truth whereof we assent. Hence it is that true Christians, that is, those who fashioned their Lives according to the Gospel, are call'd *Believers*; and the whole of Christianity is many times contained in this Word *believing*, which is the great Principle of a Christian Life. As in the Old Testament all Religion is expressed by the *Fear of God*; so in the New, by *Faith in Christ*.

And now you see what is included in *Repentance* and *Faith*, you may easily judge, whether these be not the Sum of the Gospel, that Men should forsake their Sins and turn to God, and believe in the Revelation of the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ, that is, heartily entertain and submit to it. What did Christ preach to the *Jews*, but that they should repent of their Sins, and believe on him as the *Messias*? And what did the Apostles preach, but to the same purpose? When St. Peter preached to the *Jews*, *Acts* ij. the Effect of the Sermon and the Scope of it was to persuade them *to repent and be baptized in the Name of Jesus*, that is, to profess their Belief in him, v. 38. And so *Acts* iij. 19. This is the Conclusion of his Discourse, *repent therefore and be converted*; and then he propounded Christ to them as the Object of their Faith, being the great Prophet that was prophesied of by Moses, who should be raised up among them, v. 22. So likewise St. Paul when he preached to the Jews and Gentiles, these were his great subjects, *Acts* xvij. 30. This is the Conclusion of his Sermon to the *Athenians*, to persuade them to repent by the Consideration of a future Judgment, and to persuade them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was to be the Judge of the World, from the Miracle of his Resurrection; *But now he commands all Men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a Day, &c. whereof he hath given assurance unto all Men, in that*

he hath raised him from the dead. So that you see that these are the great Doctrines of the Gospel, and were the Sum of the Apostle's Preaching; all their Sermons were Persuatives to these two Duties of *Repentance* and *Faith*.

Secondly, For the Necessity of these Doctrines. They are necessary for the escaping of eternal Misery, and attaining of everlasting Happiness. And this will appear, by considering the Nature of them, and the Relation they have to both these.

For the avoiding of eternal Punishment, 'tis necessary that Guilt should be removed, which is an Obligation to Punishment, and that cannot be but by Pardon; and sure we cannot imagine that God will ever pardon us without Repentance: he will never remit to us the Punishment of Sin, so long as we tell him we are not at all troubled for what we have done, and we are of the same Mind still, and will do the same again; and till we repent, we tell God this, and we may be sure God will not cast away his Pardons upon those that despise them; so that Repentance is necessary to the escaping of Hell.

And Faith in Christ is necessary to it; for if this be the Method of God's Grace, not to pardon Sin without Satisfaction, and Jesus Christ hath made Satisfaction for Sin by the Merit of his Sufferings; and if it be necessary that we should believe this, that the Benefit hereof may redound to us; then Faith in Christ is necessary to the obtaining of the Pardon of Sin, by which the Guilt of Sin is removed, that is, our Obligation to eternal Punishment.

And then for attaining Salvation. Christ having in the Gospel revealed to us the Way and Means to eternal Happiness, it is necessary that we should believe this Revelation of the Gospel by Jesus Christ, in order to this end. So that you see the Necessity of Faith and Repentance, because without these we can neither escape Misery, nor attain to Happiness.

I should now come to draw some Inferences from this Discourse, but I will first give Satisfaction to a *Query* or two, to which this Discourse seems to have given occasion.

1. *Query.* You will say, why do I call *Repentance* a Doctrine of the Gospel? It is a Doctrine of Nature. Natural Religion tells us, that when we have offended God, we ought to be sorry for it, and resolve to amend and reform.

Ans. I do not make the Doctrine of Repentance proper to the Gospel, as if it had not been revealed to the World before; but because it is a Doctrine which the Gospel very much presseth and persuadeth Men to, and because the great Motives and Enforcements of it are peculiar to the Gospel. So that the Doctrine of Repentance, considered with those powerful Reasons and Arguments to it which the Gospel furnisheth us withal, is in this sense proper to the Gospel, and not known to the World before.

There are two Motives and Enforcements to Repentance which the Gospel furnisheth us with.

1. Assurance of Pardon and Remission of Sins in case of Repentance, which is a great Encouragement to Repentance, and which, before the Gospel, the World had never any firm and clear Assurance of.

2. Assurance of eternal Rewards and Punishments after this Life, which is a strong Argument to persuade Men to change their Lives, that they may avoid the Misery that is threatned to impenitent Sinners, and be qualified for the Happiness which it promiseth to Repentance and Obedience. And this the Apostle tells us in the forementioned Place, *Acts* xvij. 30, 31. is that which doth as it were make Repentance to be a new Doctrine that did come with the Gospel into the World, because it was never before enforced with this powerful Argument; *The times of that Ignorance God winked at; but now he calls upon all Men every where to repent; because, &c.* When the World was in ignorance, and had not such assurance of a future State, of eternal Rewards and Punishments after this Life, the Arguments to Repentance were weak and feeble in comparison to what they now are; the necessity of this Duty was not so evident. But now God hath assured us of a future Judgment, now Exhortations to Repentance have a commanding Power and Influence upon Men; so that *Repentance*, both as it is that which is very much press'd and inculcated in the Gospel, and as it hath its chief Motives and Enforcements from the Gospel, may be said to be one of the great Doctrines of the Gospel.

Query 2.

Query 2. Whether the preaching of *Faith in Christ*, among those who are already Christians, be at all necessary? Because it seems very improper, to press those to believe in Christ, who are already persuaded that he is the *Messias*, and do entertain the History and Doctrine of the Gospel.

Ans. The *Faith* which the Apostle here means, and which he would persuade Men to, is an *effectual Belief of the Gospel*; such a Faith as hath real Effects upon Men, and makes them to live as they believe; such a Faith as persuades them of the need of these Blessings that the Gospel offers, and makes them to desire to be Partakers of them, and in order thereto to be willing to submit to those Terms and Conditions of Holiness and Obedience which the Gospel requires. This is the *Faith* we would persuade men to, and there is nothing more necessary to be press'd upon the greatest part of Christians than this; for how few are there among those who profess to believe the Gospel, who believe it in this effectual manner, so as to conform themselves to it? The Faith which most Christians pretend to, is merely negative; they do not disbelieve the Gospel, they do not consider it, nor trouble themselves about it; they do not care, nor are concerned whether it be true or not; but they have not a positive Belief of it, they are not possess'd with a firm Persuasion of the Truth of those Matters which are contained in it; if they were, such a Persuasion would produce real and positive Effects. Every Man naturally desires Happiness, and 'tis impossible that any Man that is possess'd with this Belief, that in order to Happiness it is necessary for him to do such and such things; and that if he omit or neglect them, he is unavoidably miserable, that he should not do them. Men say they believe this or that, but you may see in their Lives, what it is they believe. So that the preaching of *this Faith in Christ*, which is the only true Faith, is still necessary.

I. *Inference.* If *Repentance towards God*, and *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, be the Sum and Substance of the Gospel, then from hence we may infer the Excellency of the Christian Religion, which insists only upon those things which do tend to our Perfection and our Happiness. *Repentance* tends to our Recovery, and the bringing of us back as near as may be to Innocence. *Primus innocentiae gradus est non peccasse: secundus, poenitentia.* And then *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, tho' it be very comprehensive, and contains many things in it, yet nothing but what is eminently for our Advantage, and doth very much conduce to our Happiness. The *Historical* part of the Gospel acquaints us with the Person and Actions of our Saviour, which conduceth very much to our understanding of the Author and Means of our Salvation. The *Doctrinal* part of the Gospel contains what God requires on our part, and the Encouragements and Arguments to our Duty, from the consideration of the Recompence and Rewards of the next Life. The *Precepts* of Christ's Doctrine are such as tend exceedingly to the Perfection of our Nature, being all founded in Reason, in the Nature of God, and of a reasonable Creature; I except only those positive Institutions of the Christian Religion, the two Sacraments, which are not burthensome, and are of excellent use. This is the *first*.

II. We may learn from hence what is to be the sum and end of our Preaching, to bring Men to Repentance and a firm belief of the Gospel; but then it is to be considered, that we preach *Repentance*, so often as we preach either against Sin in general, or any particular Sin or Vice; and so often as we persuade to Holiness in general, or to the Performance of any particular Duty of Religion, or to the Exercise of any particular Grace; for Repentance includes the forsaking of Sin, and a sincere Resolution and endeavour of Reformation and Obedience. And we preach *Repentance* so often as we insist upon such Considerations and Arguments, as may be powerful to deter Men from Sin, and to engage them to Holiness. And we preach *Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, so often as we declare the Grounds of the Christian Religion, and insist upon such Arguments as tend to make it credible, and are proper to convince Men of the Truth and Reasonableness of it; so often as we explain the Mystery of Christ's Incarnation, the History of his Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Intercession, and the proper Ends and Use of these; so often as we open the Method of God's Grace for the Salvation of Sinners, the Nature of the Covenant between God and us, and the Conditions of it, and the way how a Sinner is justified and hath his Sins pardoned,

the Nature and Necessity of Regeneration and Sanctification; so often as we explain the Precepts of the Gospel, and the Promises and Threatnings of it, and endeavour to convince Men of the Equity of Christ's Commands, and to assure them of the Certainty of the Eternal Happiness which the Gospel promises to them that obey it, and of the eternal Misery which the Gospel threatens to those that are disobedient; all this is preaching *Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*.

III. This may correct the irregular Humour and Itch in many People, who are not contented with this plain and wholesome Food, but must be gratified with sublime Notions and unintelligible Mysteries, with pleasant Passages of Wit, and artificial Strains of Rhetorick, with nice and unprofitable Disputes, with bold Interpretations of dark Prophecies, and peremptory Determinations of what will happen next Year, and a punctual stating of the time when *Anti-Christ* shall be thrown down, and *Babylon* shall fall, and who shall be employed in this Work. Or if their humour lies another way, you must apply your self to it, by making sharp Reflections upon matters in present controversy and debate; you must dip your Style in Gall and Vinegar, and be all Satyr and Invective against those that differ from you, and teach People to hate one another, and to fall together by the ears; and this Men call *Gospel-preaching*, and *speaking of seasonable Truths*.

Surely St. Paul was a *Gospel-Preacher*, and such an one as may be a Pattern to all others; and yet he did none of these; he preached what Men might understand, and what they ought to believe and practise, in a plain and unaffected and convincing manner; he taught *such things as made for Peace, and whereby he might edify and build up Men in their Holy Faith*. The Doctrines that he preached will never be unseasonable, that Men should leave their Sins, and believe the Gospel, and live accordingly.

And if Men must needs be gratified with Disputes and Controversies, there are these great Controversies between God and the Sinner to be stated and determined; Whether this be Religion to follow our own Lusts and Inclinations, or to endeavour to be like God, and to be conformed to him, in Goodness and Mercy, and Righteousness, and Truth, and Faithfulness? Whether Jesus Christ be not the *Messias* and Saviour of the World? Whether Faith and Repentance and sincere Obedience be not the Terms of Salvation, and the necessary Conditions of Happiness? Whether there shall be a future Judgment, when all Men shall be sentenc'd according to their Works? Whether there be a Heaven and Hell? Whether good Men shall be eternally and unspeakably happy, and wicked Men extremely and everlastingly miserable? These are the great Controversies of Religion, upon which we are to dispute on God's behalf against Sinners. God asserts, and Sinners deny these things, not in Words, but which is more emphatical and significant, in their Lives and Actions. These are practical Controversies of *Faith*, and it concerns every Man to be resolv'd and determin'd about them, that he may frame his Life accordingly.

And so for *Repentance*; God says, Repentance is a forsaking of Sin, and a thorough change and amendment of Life; the Sinner says, that it is only a formal Confession, and a slight asking of God forgiveness: God calls upon us speedily and forthwith to repent; the Sinner saith 'tis Time enough, and it may safely be deferr'd to Sicknes or Death; these are important Controversies, and Matters of Moment. But Men do not affect common Truths; whereas these are most necessary: And indeed whatever is generally useful and beneficial, ought to be common, and not to be the less valued, but the more esteemed for being so.

And as these Doctrines of *Faith* and *Repentance* are never unseasonable, so are they more peculiarly proper when we celebrate the Holy Sacrament, which was instituted for a solemn and standing Memorial of the Christian Religion, and is one of the most powerful Arguments and Persuasives to Repentance and a good Life.

The Faith of the Gospel doth more particularly respect the Death of Christ; and therefore it is call'd *Faith in his Blood*, because *that* is more especially the Object of our Faith; the Blood of Christ, as it was a Seal of the Truth of his Doctrine, so it is also a Confirmation of all the Blessings and Benefits of the New Covenant.

And it is one of the greatest Arguments in the World to Repentance. In the

Blood of Christ, we may see our own Guilt, and in the dreadful Sufferings of the Son of God, the just desert of our Sins; for *he hath borne our Grievs, and carried our Sorrows; he was wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities*: therefore the Commemoration of his Sufferings should call our Sins to Remembrance, the Representation of his Body broken should melt our Hearts; and so often as we remember that his *Blood was shed for us*, our Eyes should run down with Rivers of Tears; so often as we look upon him whom we have pierced, we should mourn over him. When the Son of God suffer'd, the Rocks were rent in sunder; and shall not the Consideration of those Sufferings be effectual to break the most stony and obdurate Heart?

What can be more proper when we come to this Sacrament, than the renewing of our Repentance? When we partake of this Passover, we should *eat it with bitter Herbs*. The most solemn Expressions of our Repentance fall short of those Sufferings, which our blessed Saviour underwent for our Sins. If our *Head were Waters, and our Eyes Fountains of Tears*, we could never sufficiently lament the cursed Effects and Consequences of those Provocations which were so fatal to the Son of God.

And that our Repentance may be real, it must be accompanied with the Resolution of a better Life; for if we return to our Sins again, *we trample under Foot the Son of God, and prophane the Blood of the Covenant*, and out of the Cup of Salvation we drink our own Damnation, and turn that which should save us into an Instrument and Seal of our own Ruin.

S E R M O N C V I.

*Preach'd
on Ash-
Wednes-
day.*

Of Confessing and Forsaking Sin, in order to Pardon.

P R O V. XXVIII. 13.

He that covereth his Sins, shall not prosper: but whose confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have Mercy.

SINCE we are all Sinners, and liable to the Justice of God, it is a Matter of great Moment to our Comfort and Happiness, to be rightly informed by what Means, and upon what Terms we may be reconciled to God, and find Mercy with him. And to this purpose the Text gives us this Advice and Direction, *Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his Sins, shall have Mercy.*

In which Words there is a great Blessing and Benefit declared and promised to Sinners, upon certain Conditions. The Blessing and Benefit promised, is *the Mercy and Favour of God*, which comprehends all the happy Effects of God's Mercy and Goodness to Sinners: And the Conditions upon which this Blessing is promis'd are two, *Confession of our Sins, and forsaking of them*; and these two contain in them the whole Nature of that great and necessary Duty of Repentance, without which a Sinner can have no reasonable Hopes of the Mercy of God.

I. Here is a Blessing or Benefit promised, which is *the mercy and favour of God*: And this in the full extent of it, comprehends all the effects of the Mercy and Goodness of God to Sinners, and doth primarily import the pardon and forgiveness of our Sins. And this probably Solomon did chiefly intend in this Expression; for so the *mercy* of God doth most frequently signify in the Old Testament, *viz.* the forgiveness of our Sins. And thus the Prophet explains it, *Isa. lv. 7. Let the Wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous Man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

But now since the clear revelation of the Gospel, the *mercy* of God doth not only extend to the pardon of Sin, but to power against it; because this also is an Effect of God's free Grace and Mercy to Sinners, to enable them by the grace of his holy Spirit, to master and mortify their Lusts, and to persevere in Goodness to the end.

And it comprehends also our final pardon and absolution at the great Day, together with the glorious Reward of eternal Life, which the Apostle expresseth, by *finding mercy with the Lord in that day*. And this likewise is promised to Repentance, *Acts* iii. 19. *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you*; that is, that when Jesus Christ, who is now preached unto you shall come, you may receive the final Sentence of Absolution and Forgiveness.

And thus much shall suffice to have been spoken of the Blessing and Benefit here promised, *the mercy of God*; which comprehends all the Blessed Effects of the divine Grace and Goodness to Sinners; the present pardon of Sin, and power to mortify Sin, and to persevere in a good course, and our final Absolution by the Sentence of the great Day, together with the merciful and glorious Reward of eternal Life.

II. We will consider in the next place, the Conditions upon which this Blessing is promised, and they are two, the *Confessing* and *Forsaking* of our Sins. *Who so confesseth and forsaketh his Sin, shall have mercy*; and these two do contain and constitute the whole nature of Repentance, without which a Sinner can have no reasonable hopes to find *mercy* with God. I begin with the

First, The *Confession* of our sins; by which is meant a penitent acknowledgment of our Faults to God; to God, I say, because the Confession of our Sins to Men is not, generally speaking, a Condition of the forgiveness of them, but only in some particular cases, when our Sins against God are accompanied and complicated with scandal and injury to Men. In other cases the Confession of our Sins to Men is not necessary to the pardon of them, as I shall more fully shew in the progress of this Discourse.

All the Difficulty in this matter is, that the *Confession* of our Sins is opposed to the *covering* and *concealing* of them: *He that covereth his sin shall not prosper: but who so confesseth them, shall have mercy*. But no Man can hope to hide his sin from God, and therefore Confession of them to God cannot be here meant. But this Objection, if it be of any force, quite excludeth Confession to God, as no part of *Solomon's* meaning; when yet Confession of our Sins to God, is granted on all hands to be a necessary Condition of the forgiveness of them. And to take away the whole ground of this Objection; Men are said in Scripture, when they do not confess their Sins and repent of them, to hide and conceal them from God: Not to acknowledge them is as if a Man went about to cover them. And thus *David* opposeth *confession of Sins to God*, to the *hiding* of them, *Psal.* xxxii. 5. *I acknowledged my Sin unto thee, and mine Iniquity have I not hid: I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord*. So that this is no reason why the Text should not be understood of the confessing of our Sins to God.

But because the necessity of confessing our Sins to Men (that is, to the Priest) in order to the forgiveness of them, is a great point of difference between us and the Church of *Rome*, it being by them esteemed a necessary Article of Faith, but by us, so far from being necessary to be believed, that we do not believe it to be true; therefore for the clear stating of this matter, I shall briefly enquire into these Two things.

I. Whether Confession of our Sins to the Priest, as taught and practised in the Church of *Rome*, be necessary to the forgiveness of them.

II. How far the disclosing and revealing of our Sins to the Ministers of God is convenient upon other accounts, and for other purposes of Religion.

I. Whether Confession of our Sins to the Priest, and the manner in which it is taught and practised in the Church of *Rome*, be necessary to the forgiveness of them. What manner of Confession this is, the Council of *Trent* hath most precisely determined, *viz.* "Secret Confession to the Priest alone of all and every mortal Sin, which upon the most diligent search and examination of our Consciences we can remember ourselves to be guilty of since our Baptism; together

“ther with all the Circumstances of those Sins, which may change the nature of them; because without the perfect knowledge of these, the Priest cannot make a judgment of the nature and quality of Mens Sins, nor impose fitting Penance for them.” This is the Confession of Sins required in the Church of *Rome*, which the same Council of *Trent*, without any real ground from Scripture or Ecclesiastical Antiquity, doth most confidently affirm, “to have been instituted by our Lord, and by the Law of God to be necessary to Salvation, and to have been always practised in the Catholick Church.”

I shall as briefly as I can examine both these Pretences, of the Divine Institution, and constant practice of this kind of Confession.

First, For the Divine Institution of it, they mainly rely upon three Texts; in the first of which there is no mention at all of Confession, much less of a particular Confession of all our Sins with the Circumstances of them; in the other two there is no mention of Confession to the Priest; and yet all this ought clearly to appear in these Texts, before they can ground a Divine Institution upon them; for a Divine Institution is not to be founded upon obscure Consequences, but upon plain Words.

The *First* Text, and the only one upon which the Council of *Trent* grounds the Necessity of Confession, is *John* xx. 23. *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained:* It is a sign they were at a great loss for a Text to prove it, when they are glad to bring one that hath not one Word in it concerning Confession, nor the least Intimation of the necessity of it.

But let us see how they manage it to their purpose. The Apostles and their Successors (saith *Bellarmino*) by this power of *remitting* and *retaining sins*, are constituted Judges of the case of Penitents; but they cannot judge without hearing the Cause; and this infers particular Confession of Sins to the Priest, from whence he concludes it necessary to the forgiveness of Sins.

But do not the Ministers of the Gospel exercise this power of *remitting sins* in Baptism? And yet particular Confession of all Sins to the Priest is not required, no not in the Church of *Rome*, in the Baptism of adult Persons. And therefore according to them, particular Confession of Sin to the Priest is not necessary to his exercising the power of *remitting sins*, and consequently the necessity of Confession cannot be concluded from this Text.

And to shew how they are puzzled in this matter, *Vasquez* by a strange device concludes the necessity of Confession from the power of *retaining sins*; for (says he) if the Priest have a power of *retaining sins*, that is, of denying Pardon and Absolution to the Penitent, then he may impose Confession as a Condition of forgiveness, and not absolve the Penitent upon other terms. But supposing the Priest to have this unreasonable power, this makes Confession no otherwise necessary by Divine Institution, than going to *Jerusalem* or *China* is, in order to the forgiveness of our Sins, or submitting to any other foolish condition that the Priest thinks fit to require; for according to this way of reasoning, this power of *retaining sins*, makes every foolish thing that the Priest shall impose upon the Penitent, to be necessary by Divine Command and Institution.

But the truth is, this power of *remitting* and *retaining sins*, is exercised by the Ministers of the Gospel, in the administration of the Sacraments, and the preaching of the Gospel, which is call'd *the word of reconciliation, the ministry whereof is committed to them*. And thus the ancient Fathers understood it; and as a great Divine told them in the Council of *Trent*, it was perhaps never expounded by any one Father concerning the business of Confession.

The *Second* Text they alledge to this purpose is, *1 John* i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* Here indeed is Confession; but general, not particular, as appears by the opposition, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us: but if we confess our sins*, that is, if we acknowledge our selves to have been Sinners. And then there is not a word of confessing to the Priest; the Confession here meant is plainly to God, because it follows, *he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*; that is, God, who is necessarily understood in the former part of the sentence; as if it had run thus, *If we confess our sins to God, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

The *Third* Text is, *Jam. v. 16. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another.* And here again there is only mention of Confession, but not a word of the Priest; and for another Reason, if I had been to advise them, they should not have prest this Text for their service in this cause, because it does them as much hurt as good; for it is certain, the Duty of Confession here enjoined is reciprocal and mutual, *confess your sins one to another*: So that if by virtue of this Text the People are bound to confess their sins to the Priest, the Priest is hereby as much obliged to confess his sins to the People; which I dare say is more than they have a mind to prove from this Text. The plain meaning whereof is this, that as Christians should be ready to perform all mutual Offices of Charity, so to assist and comfort one another by their Counsel and Prayers. And therefore the Apostle adviseth Christians when they are sick, if at the same time they be under any spiritual trouble, by reason of the Guilt of any sin lying upon their Consciences, to lay open their case to one another, that so they may have the help of one another's Advice and Prayers; *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed*, both of your bodily and spiritual distemper. Not that the Priest or Minister is here excluded; St. James had spoken of that particular before, that when *any was sick*, he should *send for the Elders of the Church*, that he might in the first place have the benefit of their Council and Prayers; and then, because private Christians may also be useful to one another in this kind, he adds, that they should also lay open their condition and troubles *to one another*, that so they might have the help of one another's Advice and Prayers; and very probably all the Confession here meant of private Christians *to one another* is of the offences and injuries they may have been guilty of one towards another; that they should be reconciled upon this occasion, and, as a testimony of their Charity, should *pray one for another*; whereas they are bound *to send for the Elders of the Church*, and *they are to pray over them*, as an act not only of Charity, but of *Superiority*, and by vertue of their Office in the Church, a more especial Blessing being to be expected from *their Prayers*.

These three Texts are the main Arguments from Scripture, which they of the Church of *Rome* bring to prove their auricular or secret Confession to be of Divine Institution; and woful Proofs they are; which shews what miserable shifts they are reduced to, who resolve to maintain a bad Cause.

I proceed in the *Second* place, to discover the Falshood of their other Pretences, that this kind of Confession hath always been practised in the Catholick Church; and not only so, but believed absolutely necessary to the remission of Mens sins and their eternal salvation.

The truth of the whole matter is this; Publick Confession and Penance for open and scandalous Crimes was in use, and with great strictness observed in the first Ages of Christianity; and there was then no general Law or Custom, that exacted secret confession of sins to the Priest, as a necessary part of repentance, and condition of forgiveness: afterward publick Penance was by degrees disused; which plainly shews that, in the opinion of the Church, this Discipline, how useful soever, was not of absolute necessity to restore Men to the Favour of God.

In place of this came in private Confession to the Priest, particularly appointed to this Office, and called *the Penitentiary*; but upon occasion of a scandal that happen'd, this also was abrogated by *Nectarius* Bishop of *Constantinople*; which shews that neither was this necessary. And this Act of *Nectarius* was justified by his Successor St. *Chrysostom*, who does over and over most expressly teach, that Confession of our sins to Men is not necessary to the forgiveness of them, but that it is sufficient to confess them to God alone; so that St. *Chrysostom* does plainly stand condemned by the Decrees of the Council of *Trent*.

And thus for several Ages the matter rested, till the Degeneracy of the Church of *Rome*, growing towards its height, about the IX and X Centuries, some began to contend for the necessity of secret Confession; and this in the Year 1215, in the IV Council of *Lateran*, under Pope *Innocent III.* was decreed and establish'd.

And this is the first publick Law that was made in the Christian Church concerning this matter, notwithstanding all the boasts of the Council of *Trent*, about the antiquity of this Institution and Practice; for *Gratian*, who lived about 50 Years before this Council, tells us, that in his time several wise and religious Men were

were of the contrary opinion, and did not hold Confession necessary by virtue of any Divine Law. Afterwards in the Council of *Florence*, and especially in that of *Trent*, this Decree of the Council of *Lateran* was confirmed and enlarged in many particulars, of which I have already given some account.

And whereas they pretend for themselves, the universal Practice not only of the past but present Church, we are able to shew from clear Testimony of their own Writers, that Confession, as taught and practised in the Church of *Rome*, is nowhere else in use at this day, neither among the *Abyssines*, nor *Indians* of *St. Thomas*, nor the *Nestorians*, nor the *Armenians*, nor the *Jacobites*, Churches of great antiquity and vast extent. And as for the *Greek Church*, if we may believe *Gratian*, and the author of the Gloss upon the Canon-Law, the *Greeks* had antiently no Tradition concerning the necessity of Confession, nor do they at this day agree with the *Roman Church* in all points concerning it.

So that, in short, there is no Nation nor Church throughout the whole World, that bears the name of Christian, the *Roman Church* only excepted, that doth fully embrace and maintain the whole Doctrine of the Council of *Trent* concerning Confession; and yet, according to their Principles, the whole is of equal necessity to be believed, as any part of it. With what face then do they declare, that this manner of Confession always was, and still is observed in the *Catholick*, that is, in the whole Christian Church?

I have not time to shew the great and manifold inconveniencies and mischiefs of this practice: How infinite a torture it is to the Consciences of Men, by entangling them in endless doubts and scruples; and how great a scandal it is to the Christian Profession, in the lewd management of it by the Priests, is evident from the two Bulls of Pope *Pius IV.* and *Gregory XV.* which mention things too shameful to be declared; not to insist upon other horrible abuses of it to the vilest and wickedest purposes; not so much to direct the Consciences of Men, as to dive into their Secrets, of which there are so many plain and notorious instances, that they are past denial.

The other thing pretended for it is, that it is a great restraint upon Men from sin. And very probably it is so to modest and well-disposed Persons; but experience shews how quite contrary an effect it hath upon others, who are the far greatest part of Mankind. Does not all the World see in the Popish Countries, in the time of their Carnival, just before *Lent*, the Anniversary season of Confession, how scandalous a liberty Men take of doing lewd and wicked things; and that for this very Reason, because their Consciences are presently to be eased and scour'd (as they call it) by Confession and Absolution? And they therefore take the opportunity to gratify their Lusts, and fill up the measure of their Iniquity at that time, because with one labour they can set their Consciences right, and clear them of all guilt. And they look upon this as a special piece of spiritual good husbandry, to quit their scores with God at once, that so they may have no occasion to trouble him, nor the Priest, nor themselves again for a good while after. So that Confession, instead of being a restraint from sin, gives great encouragement to it, by deluding Men into a vain hope of obtaining the pardon of their sins from time to time, tho' they still continue in the practice of them; by which device, Mens sins are at once *remitted* and *retained*; the Priest remits them by Absolution, and the Penitent retains them, by going on still in the Commission of them, in hope of obtaining a new Absolution as often as occasion shall require. I proceed to the

II. Enquiry, namely, How far the disclosing and revealing our sins to the Ministers of God, may be convenient upon other accounts, and to other purposes of Religion? To which the Answer is very plain and short; so far as is necessary either to the direction, or the ease of Mens Consciences.

There are many Cases wherein Men, under the guilt and trouble of their sins, can neither appease their own Minds, nor sufficiently direct themselves, without recourse to some pious and prudent Guide: in these Cases, Men certainly do very well, and many times prevent a great deal of trouble and perplexity to themselves, by a timely discovery of their condition to some faithful Minister, in order to their direction and satisfaction, without which they shall never perhaps be able to clear themselves of the obscurity and entanglement of their own minds, but by smothering their trouble in their own breasts, shall proceed from one degree of

melancholy to another, till at last they be plunged either into distraction or despair; whereas the discovery of their condition in time, would prove a present and effectual remedy. And to this purpose, a general Confession is for the most part sufficient; and where there is occasion for a more particular discovery, there is no need of raking into the particular and foul Circumstances of Mens sins, to give that advice which is necessary for the cure and ease of the Penitent; a thing so far from being desirable, that it must needs be very grievous to every modest and good Man.

And thus far Confession is not only allowed, but encouraged among Protestants. In the *Lutheran* Churches, *Chemnitius* tells us, that private general Confession is in use and practice. And *Calvin* freely declares, that he is so far from being against Peoples repairing to their Pastors to this purpose, that he earnestly wisheth it were every where observed before the receiving of the Sacrament. And the same is the sense of our own Church, laying no necessity upon Men in this matter, but advising, especially before the Sacrament, those who have any trouble upon their Consciences, to repair to some discreet and faithful Minister of God's Word, for advice and satisfaction. And thus all the good use which can be made of Confession, may be had in our Church, without the ill Effects and Consequences of the *Romish* Confession, and without laying a Yoke upon the Consciences of Men, which our Saviour never laid.

And now I have as briefly and as plainly as I could, stated this Controversy between us and the Church of *Rome*, concerning the necessity and use of secret Confession to the Ministers of God, as the proper Guides and Directors of our Consciences. But it is granted on all hands, that Confession of our sins to God is necessary; and there is no doubt but it is here intended in the Text, *viz.* a Penitent acknowledgment of our sins; the nature whereof I shall briefly explain to you.

And it must not only be a general Confession that we are sinners; but there must be a particular acknowledgment of our sins to God, so far as upon a particular discussion and examination of our Consciences, we can call them to remembrance; especially our most heinous sins, which our Consciences will not suffer us to forget, must be particularly acknowledged, with the several aggravations of them.

And this Confession must be accompanied with such a shame and sorrow for our sins, as produceth in us a sincere resolution to leave them, and to betake our selves to a better course. These are the principal ingredients of a penitent Confession.

1. There must be a shame, without which there is no hope of amendment. Confession always supposeth conviction of a Fault; and he that is truly convinced that he hath done amiss, cannot but be ashamed of what he hath done. And thus the Penitents in Scripture were wont to make Confession of their sins to God, *Exra* ix. 6. *O my God* (says he) *I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God.* So *Jeremiab*, Ch. iii. 25. *We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against the Lord.* And so likewise *Daniel*, Ch. ix. 5. *We have sinned, and have committed Iniquity, and done wickedly; unto us belongeth confusion of face.* And thus our Saviour describes the penitent behaviour of the Publican, as ashamed to look up to that God whom he had offended, *Luke* xviii. 13. *He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven; but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

2. Confession must be always accompanied with great sorrow for our sins, considering the great dishonour we have brought to God, and the danger into which we have brought our selves; *I will declare mine Iniquity*, (says *David*) *and I will be sorry for my sin.*

And this sorrow must be proportionable to the degree of our Sin. If we have been very wicked, and have sinned greatly against the Lord, and have multiplied our transgressions, and continued long in an evil course, have neglected God, and forgotten him days without number, the measure of our sorrow must bear some proportion to the degree of our sins: If they have been as *Scarlet and Crimson*, (as the Prophet expresseth it) that is of a deeper dye than ordinary, our Sorrow must be as deep as our Guilt; for 'tis not a slight trouble and a few tears that will wash out such stains.

Not that tears are absolutely necessary, though they do very well become, and most

most commonly accompany a sincere Repentance. All tempers are not in this alike; some cannot express their sorrow by Tears, even then when they are most inwardly and sensibly grieved. But if we can easily shed Tears upon other occasions, certainly *rivers of tears* ought to *run down our Eyes*, because we have broken God's Laws, the reasonable, and righteous, and good Laws of so good a God, of so gracious a Sovereign, of so mighty a Benefactor, of the Founder of our Being, and the perpetual Patron and Protector of our Lives: But if we cannot command our tears, there must, however, be great trouble and contrition of Spirit, especially for great Sins; to be sure to that degree as to produce the

3. Property I mention of a penitent Confession, namely, a sincere Resolution to leave our Sins, and betake ourselves to a better course. He does not confess his Fault, but stand in it, who is not resolved to amend. True Shame and Sorrow for our Sins, is utterly inconsistent with any thought of returning to them. It argues great obstinacy and impudence to confess a fault and continue in it. Whenever we make Confession of our Sins to God, *surely it is meet to say unto him I will not offend any more; that which I know not, teach thou me; and if I have done Iniquity, I will do no more.*

This is the *first* part of Repentance mention'd in the Text, the first Condition of our finding Mercy with God, the penitent acknowledgment of our Sins to him. I proceed to the

Second Condition required to make us capable of the Mercy of God, which is the actual *forsaking* of our Sins; *Who so confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.* I shall not go about to explain what is meant by *forsaking sin*, it is that which every body can understand, but few will do; there lies all the difficulty. I shall only put you in mind, that forsaking of sin comprehends our return to our duty, *that necessarily follows from it.* In Sins of Commission, he that hath left any Vice, does thereby become Master of the contrary Virtue. *Virtus est vitium fugere*; not to be drunk, is to be sober; not to oppress, or defraud, or deal falsely, is to be Just and Honest: And for Sins of Omission, the forsaking of them is nothing else, but the doing of those Duties which we omitted and neglected before. And therefore what *Solomon* here calls *forsaking of sin*, is elsewhere in Scripture more fully express'd, by *ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well*, Isa. i. 16. By forsaking our sins, and turning to God, Isa. lv. 7. *Let the wicked Man forsake his ways, and the unrighteous Man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.* By turning from all our Sins, and keeping all God's Laws and Statutes, Ezek. xviii, 21. *If the wicked will turn from all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right.*

And this is a most essential part of Repentance, and a necessary condition of our finding mercy with God. That part of Repentance which I have mentioned and insisted upon before, the penitent acknowledgment of our sins to God, with Shame and Sorrow for them, and a firm Purpose and Resolution to leave them; all this is but preparatory to the actual forsaking of them: that which perfects and compleats our Repentance, is *to turn from our evil ways, and to break off our sins by righteousness.*

And these terms of *confessing and forsaking our sins*, are reasonable in themselves, and honourable to God, and profitable to us; and upon lower Terms we have no reason to expect the Mercy of God, nor in truth, are we capable of it, either by the present forgiveness of our sins, or the final absolution of the great Day, and the blessed Reward of eternal Life. God peremptorily requires this change as a Condition of our Forgiveness and Happiness; *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*, Acts iii. 19. *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments*, Matth. xix. 17. *Without holiness no Man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xij. 14. And why should any Man hope for the Mercy of God upon other terms than those which he hath so plainly and peremptorily declared?

It is a mean and unworthy thought of God, to imagine that he will accept Men to his Favour and eternal Life upon other Terms than of better Obedience. Will any wise Father or Prince accept less from his Children and Subjects? Will they be satisfied with sighs and tears, as well as with Obedience; and well pleased if they be but melancholy for their Faults, tho' they never mend them? We must not impute that to God, which would be a defect of Wisdom and good Govern-

ment in any Father or Prince upon Earth. God values no part of Repentance upon any other account, but as it tends to reclaim us to our Duty, and ends in our Reformation and Amendment.

This is that which qualifies us for the Happiness of another Life, and *makes us meet to be made partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in light*. And without this, tho' God should be pleased to forgive us, yet we could not forgive our selves; and notwithstanding the legal discharge from Guilt, the Sting of it would remain, and we should, like our first Parents after they had sinn'd, run away and *hide our selves from God*, tho' he spake never so kindly to us. God hath placed in every Man's Mind an inexorable Judge, that will grant no Pardon and Forgiveness but to a reformed Penitent, to him that hath such a sense of the Evil of his past Life, as to become a better Man for the future.

And whoever entertains any other notion of the Grace and Mercy of God to Sinners, confounds the Nature of things, and does plainly overthrow the Reason of all Laws, which is to restrain Men from Sin: But when it is committed, to pardon it without Amendment, is to encourage the Practice of it, and to take away the Reverence and Veneration of those Laws, which seem so severely to forbid it. So that next to Impunity, the forgiveness of Mens sins upon such easy and unfit Terms, gives boldness and encouragement to sin, and must necessarily in the opinion of Men lessen the Honour and Esteem of God's Laws.

And thus I have considered and explained both the Blessing and Benefit which is here promised and declared, *viz. the Mercy and Favour of God*, which comprehends both the present Forgiveness of our Sins, and Power against them, and Grace to persevere in Goodness to the end, and our final Absolution at the great Day, and the Glorious and Merciful Reward of Eternal Life: and likewise the Conditions upon which this Blessing is promised, *viz. the penitent acknowledgment of our Sins to God*, with such Shame and Sorrow for them, as produceth a sincere Resolution of leaving them, and returning to a better Course, and the *actual forsaking of them*, which involves in it our actual return to our Duty, and a constant and sincere Obedience to the Laws of God in the future course of our Lives.

I shall now make some Application of this Discourse to our selves. I am sure we are all nearly concerned in it. The best of us have many sins to confess and forsake; some of us very probably have need to change the whole course of our Lives, to put us into a Capacity of the Mercy of God. This work can never be unseasonable; but there cannot be a more proper time for it, than when we are solemnly preparing our selves to receive the Holy Sacrament; in which as we do commemorate the great Mercy of God to Mankind, so we do likewise renew and confirm our covenant with him, that Holy Covenant wherein we engage our selves to forsake our sins, as ever we expect the forgiveness of them at God's hand.

To persuade us hereto, be pleased to consider the Reasonableness of the Thing, the infinite Benefit and Advantage of it; and, which is beyond all other Arguments, the absolute Necessity of it, to make us capable of the Mercy and Forgiveness of God in this World and the other, and *to deliver us from the Wrath which is to come*, and from those terrible storms of Vengeance, which will infallibly fall upon impenitent Sinners: So that we have all the Reason and all the Encouragement in the World, to resolve upon a better Course. Upon this Condition, the Mercy of God is ready to meet and embrace us; God will pardon our greatest Provocations, and be perfectly reconciled to us. So he hath declared by the Prophet, *Isaiab i. 16. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the Evil of your doings from before mine Eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; tho' your sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow; tho' they be red as Crimson, they shall be as Wool.* And what greater Encouragement can we desire, than that upon such easy and advantageous Terms, God should be so ready to have an end put to all Controversies and Quarrels between him and us?

I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, to take up a serious Resolution to break off your sins by repentance; and to reform whatever, upon due search and tryal of your ways, you shall find to be amiss in your lives.

I beseech you by the Mercies of God, that Mercy which naturally leads to repentance

rance, and which is long-suffering to us-ward, on purpose that we may not perish, but come to repentance; which hath spared us so often, and is not yet exhausted and tired out by our intolerable obstinacy, and innumerable provocations; that mercy which moved the Son of God to become Man, to live among us, and to die for us; who, now as it were, speaks to us from the Cross, extending his pierced Hands, and painful Arms to embrace us, and through the gasping Wounds of his Side let us see the tender and bleeding Compassion of his Heart; that mercy, which if we now despise it, we shall in vain one day implore, and catch hold of, and hang upon, to save us from sinking into eternal Perdition; that mercy, which how much soever we now presume upon, will then be so far from interposing between us and the wrath of God, that it will highly inflame and exasperate it. For whatever impenitent Sinners may now think, they will then certainly find that the Divine Justice, when it is thoroughly provoked, and whetted by his abused Mercy and Goodness, will be most terribly severe, and, like a Razor set with Oyl, will cut the keener for its smoothness.

Consider this all ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver: Consider and shew yourselves Men, O ye Transgressors!

We do consider all this, (may some perhaps say) but we have been great sinners, so great, that we doubt whether our case be not already desperate.

This, if it be sensibly said, with deep Sorrow and Contrition, with that Shame and Confusion of face, which becomes great Offenders, is a good Confession, and the best Reason in the World, why ye should now break off your sins; For if what you have already done, do really make your case so doubtful and difficult; do not by sinning yet more and more against the Lord, make it quite desperate and past remedy; do but you repent, and God will yet return and have mercy upon you. And do not say you cannot do it, when it must be done, or you are undone. Power and Necessity go together: When Men are hard prest, they find a power which they thought they had not; and when it comes to the push, Men can do that which they plainly see they either must do, or be ruined for ever.

But after all this, I am very sensible how great a need there is of God's powerful Assistance in this case, and that it is not an ordinary resolution and common measure of God's Grace, that will reclaim those who have been long habituated to an evil course.

Let us therefore earnestly beg of him, that he would make these Counsels effectual, that he would grant us repentance unto life, that he would make us all sensible of our faults, sorry for them, and resolved to amend them; and let us every one put up David's prayer to God for our selves, *Deal with thy Servant according to thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes. Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, that I may keep them unto the end.*

I have now done; I am only to mind you of another Duty, which is to accompany our Repentance, and Fasting, and Prayer, as a Testimony of the Sincerity of our Repentance, and one of the best means to make our Fasting and Prayer acceptable to God, and to turn away his Judgments from us, and that is Charity and Alms to the Poor, whose number is very great among us, and their necessities very pressing and clamorous, and therefore do call for a bountiful Supply.

And to convince Men of the necessity of this Duty, and the Efficacy of it in conjunction with our Repentance, and Fasting, and Prayers, I shall only offer to your Consideration a few plain Texts of Scripture, which need no Comment upon them, Dan. iv. 27. It is the Prophet's advice to *Nebuchadnezzar*; *Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquity by shewing Mercy to the poor; if so be it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.* Acts x. 4. The Angel there tells *Cornelius*, *Thy prayers and thine Alms are come up for a Memorial before God.* Isa. lviii. 6. *Is not this the fast, which I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burthens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thy own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the Glory of the Lord shall be thy reward: Then*
shal

shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer thee; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am. To which I will only add that gracious Promise of our Saviour; Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy; and that terrible Sentence in St. James; He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.

S E R M O N CVII.

Of Confession, and Sorrow for Sin.

PSAL. XXXVIII. 18.

I will declare mine Iniquity, and be sorry for my Sin.

IN this Psalm *David* does earnestly beg Mercy and Forgiveness of God, and in order to the obtaining of it, he declares both his Sins, and his Repentance for them in these Words, which contain in them two of the necessary Ingredients, or at least Concomitants of a true Repentance, *viz.* Confession of Sin, and Sorrow for it.

I shall speak something of the *first* of these, *viz.* Confession of Sin: but the *Second*, *viz.* Sorrow for Sin, shall be the main Subject of my Discourse.

I. Confession of Sin; *I will declare mine Iniquity*; or as it is in the Old Translation, *I will confess my wickedness*. Of which I shall speak under these *three* Heads.

I. What Confession of Sin is.

II. How far 'tis necessary.

III. What are the Reasons and Grounds of this Necessity.

I. What Confession of Sin is. It is a Declaration or Acknowledgment of some moral Evil or Fault to another, which we are conscious to our selves we have been guilty of. And this Acknowledgment may be made by us, either to God or Man. The Scripture mentions both. Confession of our Sins to God is very frequently mentioned in Scripture, as the first and necessary part of Repentance; and sometimes, and in some cases, Confession to Men is not only recommended but enjoined.

II. How far Confession of our Sins is necessary. That it is necessary to confess our Sins to God, the Scripture plainly declares, and is I think a matter out of all dispute. For it is a necessary part of Repentance, that we should confess our Sins to God, with a due sense of the evil of them; and therefore the Scripture maketh this a necessary Qualification, and Condition of Pardon and Forgiveness. Prov. xxviii. 13. *Who so confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy.* 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*; implying that if we do not confess our Sins to God, the guilt of them will still remain; to God I say, for of Confession to him St. John plainly speaks, when he says, *He is faithful and just*. Who? God surely; who tho' he be not named before, yet is necessarily understood in the Words before; *If we confess our sins, i. e. to God, he is faithful and just*.

A general Confession of our Sins is absolutely necessary; and in some cases a particular acknowledgment of them, and repentance for them, especially if the Sins have been great and deliberate and presumptuous; in this Case a particular Confession of them, and Repentance for them, is necessary so far as we can particularly recollect them, and call them to Remembrance: Whereas for Sins of ignorance and infirmity, of surprize and daily incurfion, for lesser Omissions, and the Defects and Imperfections of our best Actions and Services, we have all the Reason that can be to believe, that God will accept of a general Confession of them

them, and Repentance for them. And if any Man ask me, where I find this distinction in Scripture between a general and particular Repentance? I answer, that it is not necessary it should be any where express'd in Scripture, being so clearly founded in the Nature and Reason of the thing; because in many cases it is not possible that we should have a particular Knowledge and Remembrance of all our particular Sins; as is plain in Sins of Ignorance, since our very calling them by that Name does necessarily suppose that we do not know them. It is impossible we should remember those Sins afterwards which we did not know when they were committed: And therefore either a general Repentance for these and the other Sins I mentioned of the like Nature, must be sufficient, in order to the Pardon of them; or we must say, that they are unpardonable, which would be very unreasonable, because this would be to make lesser Sins more unpardonable than those which are far greater.

And yet tho' this difference between a general and particular Repentance be nowhere expressly mention'd in Scripture, there does not want foundation for it there. Psal. xix. 12. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret Sins* (i. e.) such as we do not discern and take notice of when they are committed. And yet David supposeth, that upon a general Acknowledgment of them, and Repentance for them, we may be cleansed from them, tho' we cannot make a particular Acknowledgment of them, and exercise a particular Repentance for them, because they are *secret*, and we do not particularly understand what they are.

As for our confessing our Sins to Men, both Scripture and Reason do in some cases recommend and enjoin it. As,

1. In order to the obtaining of the Prayers of good Men for us. *James v. 16. Confess your Sins one to another; he said before, the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.* This in all probability is meant of the miraculous Power of Prayer, which St. Chrysostom reckons among the miraculous Gifts of the Spirit, bestowed upon Christians in the first Ages of the Church: And this is very much countenanc'd and confirm'd by what presently follows after this Command of *confessing our Sins one to another, and praying one for another*, and given as the Reason of it; *for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* The Original is *δενσις ενεργημενη*, the inspir'd prayer, which in the verse before is call'd *the prayer of faith*, meaning that miraculous Faith, in the Power whereof Christians did obtain of God whatever they were inspir'd to ask of him; according to our Saviour's Promise in the Gospel, concerning the Efficacy of the Prayers of Christians, which we find mention'd among the other miraculous Powers which were to be conferr'd upon them by the coming of the Holy Ghost.

2. Confession of our Sins to Men is likewise reasonable, in order to the ease and satisfaction of our Minds, and our being directed in our Duty for the future. In this Case common Reason and Prudence, without any Precept of Scripture, will direct Men to have recourse to this Remedy, viz. to discover and lay open our Disease to some skilful spiritual Physician, to some faithful Friend or prudent Guide, in order to spiritual Advice and Direction, for the peace and satisfaction of our Minds. And then,

3. In case our Sins have been publick and scandalous, both Reason and the Practice of the Christian Church do require, that when Men have publicly offended, they should give publick Satisfaction, and open Testimony of their Repentance.

But as for *private* and *auricular Confession* of our Sins to a Priest in all Cases, and as of absolute necessity to our obtaining Pardon and Forgiveness from God, as the Church of Rome teacheth, this is neither necessary by divine Precept, nor by any Constitution and Practice of the ancient Christian Church, as I have shewn in my former Discourse.

Not to mention the bad consequence of this Practice, and the impious and dangerous use which hath been made of this Seal of Confession, for the concealing and carrying on of the most wicked and barbarous Designs, and the debauching of the Penitents, by drawing them into the Commission of the same and greater Sins than those which they confessed, which the more devout Persons of that Church have frequently complain'd of; I proceed now to shew briefly in the

III. Place, the Grounds and Reasons of the necessity of confessing our Sins to God; and I shall but just mention them.

1. From the Precept and Command of God; for which I have already produced clear Proof of Scripture.

2. From the Nature of the thing, because without this there can be no Repentance towards God. He that will not so much as own the faults which he hath been guilty of, can never repent of them. If we will not confess our Sins to God, we are never like to be sorry for them. Thus much for the *first* thing in the Text, the Confession of our Sins. I proceed now to the

Second Ingredient of Repentance mentioned in the Text, which is Sorrow for Sin; *I will declare mine Iniquity, and be sorry for my sin.* In the handling of this Argument, I shall

I. Consider the Nature of this Passion of Sorrow.

II. The Reason and Grounds of our Sorrow for Sin.

III. The Measure and Degrees of it.

IV. How far the outward expression of our inward grief by Tears is necessary to a true Repentance.

I. For the Nature of this Passion. Sorrow is a trouble or disturbance of mind, occasioned by something that is evil, done or suffer'd by us, or which we are in danger of suffering, that tends greatly to our damage or mischief: So that to be sorry for a thing, is nothing else but to be sensibly affected with the Consideration of the evil of it, and of the Mischief and Inconvenience which is like to redound to us from it: Which if it be a Moral Evil, such as Sin is, to be sorry for it, is to be troubled that we have done it, and to wish with all our hearts that we had been wiser, and had done otherwise; and if this Sorrow be true and real, if it abide and stay upon us, it will produce a firm Purpose and Resolution in us, not to do the like for the future.

'Tis true indeed, that we are said to be sorry for the Death and Loss of Friends; but this is rather the Effect of Natural Affection than of our Reason, which always endeavours to check and moderate our Grief for that which we cannot help, and labours by all means to turn our Sorrow into Patience: And we are said likewise to grieve for the Miseries and Sufferings of others; but this is not so properly Sorrow as Pity and Compassion. Sorrow rather respects our selves, and our own doings and sufferings. I proceed in the

II. Place to enquire into the Reasons and Grounds of our Sorrow for Sin; and they, as I have already hinted, are these *two*, the intrinsic, or the consequent evil of Sin; either the evil of Sin in it self, or the Mischiefs and Inconveniences which it will bring upon us. For every one that is sorry for any Fault he is guilty of, he is so upon one of these *two* accounts; either upon the score of Ingenuity, or of Interest; either because he hath done a thing which is unworthy in it self, or because he hath done something which may prove prejudicial to himself; either out of a Principle of love and gratitude to God, or from a Principle of self-love. And though the former of these be the better, the more generous principle of Sorrow; yet the latter is usually the first; because it is the more sensible, and toucheth us more nearly: For Sin is a base and ill-natur'd thing, and renders a Man not so apt to be affected with the Injuries he hath offer'd to God, as with the Mischief which is likely to fall upon himself. And therefore I will begin with the latter, because it is usually the more sensible Cause of our Trouble and Sorrow for Sin.

1. The great Mischief and Inconvenience that Sin is like to bring upon us. When a Man is thoroughly convinc'd of the danger into which his Sins have brought him, that they have *made him a Child of wrath, and a Son of perdition*, that he is thereby fallen under the heavy displeasure of Almighty God, and liable to all those dreadful curses which are written in his Book, that ruin and destruction hang over him, and that nothing keeps him from eternal and intolerable torments, but the Patience and Long-suffering of God, which he does not know how soon it may cease to interpose between him and the Wrath of God, and let him fall into that endless and insupportable misery, which is the just portion and desert of his Sins; he that lays to heart the sad Estate and Condition into which he hath brought himself by Sin, and the Mischiefs which attend him every moment of his

continuance in that state, and how they are to him, and that there is but a step between him and Death, and hardly another between that and Hell, he cannot surely but be very sorry for what he hath done, and be highly displeased and offended with himself, that he should be the Author of his own ruin, and have contributed as much as in him lies to his everlasting undoing.

2. Another and better Principle of Sorrow for Sin, is Ingenuity; because we are sensible, that we have carried our selves very unworthily towards God, and have been injurious to him, who hath laid all possible Obligations upon us: For he hath made us, and hath given us our beings, and hath charged his watchful Providence with the continual care of us; his bounty hath ministred to the necessities and comforts of our Life; all the Blessings that we enjoy, are the Effects of his mere love and goodness, without any hope of requital, or expectation of any other return from us, than of love, of gratitude, and obedience; which yet are of no advantage to him, but very beneficial and comfortable to our selves: For he does not expect Duty and Obedience from us, with any regard of Benefit to himself, but for our sakes, and in order to our own Happiness.

Nay, his kindness did not stop here, but after we had abused him by our repeated provocations, yet he still continued his care of us; and when we had farther provoked him to withdraw his Love, and to call in his abused Goodness, and had done what lay in us to make our selves miserable, he would not suffer us to be undone, but found out a Ransom for us, and hath contrived a way for the pardon of all our offences, and to reconcile us to himself, and to restore us to Happiness, by the most stupendous and amazing condescension of love and goodness that ever was, even by giving his only Son to die for us.

And can we reflect upon all this, and not be sorry and grieved at our very hearts, that we should be so evil to him, who hath been so good to us; that we should be so undutiful to so loving a Father, so unkind to so faithful and constant a Friend, so ungrateful and unworthy to so mighty a Benefactor? If any thing will melt us into Tears, surely this will do it, to consider that we have sinned against him who made us, and continually preserves us, and after all our unkindness to him, did still retain so great a love for us, as to redeem us from Hell and Destruction by the Death and Suffering of his Son, and notwithstanding all our Offences does still offer us Pardon and Peace, Life and Happiness. Such Considerations as these, seriously laid to Heart, should, one would think, break the hardest Heart, and make Tears to gush even out of a Rock. I proceed in the

III. Place to consider the Measure and Degree of our Sorrow for Sin. That it admits of Degrees, which ought to bear some proportion to the heinousness of our Sins, and the several aggravations of them, and the time of our continuance in them, is out of all dispute: For tho' the least Sin be a just cause of the deepest Sorrow; yet because our greatest grief can never bear a due proportion to the vast and infinite evil of Sin, God is pleased to require and accept such measures of Sorrow, as do not bear an exact correspondence to the Malignity of Sin, provided they be according to the capacity of our Nature, and in some sort proportioned to the degree and aggravations of our Sin; *i. e.* Tho' the highest degree of our Sorrow doth necessarily fall below the evil of the least Sin; yet God requires that we should be more deeply affected with some Sins than others.

But what is the lowest degree which God requires in a true Penitent, and will accept, as it is impossible for me to tell, so it is unprofitable for any body to know: For no Man can reasonably make this enquiry with any other design, than that he may learn how he may come off with God upon the cheapest and easiest terms. Now there cannot be a worse sign that a Man is not truly sensible of the great evil of Sin, than this, that he desires to be troubled for it as little as may be, and no longer than needs must: And none surely are more unlikely to find acceptance with God, than those who deal so nearly, and endeavour to drive so hard a bargain with him.

And therefore I shall only say this in general, concerning the degrees of our Sorrow for Sin; that Sin being so great an evil in it self, and of so pernicious a consequence to us, it cannot be too much lamented and grieved for by us: And the more and greater our Sins have been, and the longer we have continued and lived in them, they call for so much the greater Sorrow, and deeper Humiliation

from us: For the Reasoning of our Saviour concerning *Mary Magdalen*, *She loved much, because much was forgiven her*, is proportionably true in this case, those who have sinned much, should sorrow the more.

And then we must take this Caution along with us, that if we would judge aright of the Truth of our Sorrow for Sin, we must not measure it so much by the Degrees of sensible trouble and affliction, as by the rational Effects of it, which are hatred of Sin, and a fix'd Purpose and Resolution against it for the future: For he is most truly sorry for his Miscarriage, who looks upon what he hath done amiss with Abhorrence and Detestation of the Thing, and wisheth he had not done it, and censures himself severely for it, and thereupon resolves not to do the like again. And this is the Character which St. Paul gives of a Godly Sorrow, 2 Cor. vii. 10. that it *worketh Repentance*, *μετάνοιαν*, it produceth a real Change in our minds, and makes us to alter our purpose and resolution: And tho' such a Person may not be so passionately and sensibly afflicted for Sin, yet it appears by the Effect, that he hath a deeper and more rational resentment of the Evil of it, than that Man who is sad and melancholy and drooping for never so long a Time, and after all returns to his former sinful Course; the Degree of his Sorrow may appear greater, but the Effect of it is really less.

IV. As for the outward Expressions of our Grief and Sorrow. The usual Sign and outward Expression of Sorrow is Tears; but these being not the Substance of our Duty, but an external Testimony of it, which some tempers are more unapt to than others; we are much less to judge of the Truth of our Sorrow for Sin by these, than by our inward sensible Trouble and Affliction of Spirit. Some Persons are of a more tender and melting disposition, and can command their Tears upon a little Occasion, and upon very short warning; and such Persons that can weep for every thing else that troubles them, have much more reason to suspect the Truth of their Sorrow for Sin, if this outward expression of it be wanting. And we find in Scripture, that the Sorrow of true Penitents does very frequently discover itself by this outward Sign of it. Thus when *Ezra* and the People made confession of their Sins to God, it is said, that *they wept very sore*, *Ezra* x. *Peter*, when he reflected upon that great Sin of denying his Master, 'tis said, *He went forth and wept bitterly*. *David* also was abundant in this expression of his grief. In the Book of Psalms he speaks frequently of his *sighs* and *groans*, and of *watering his couch with his tears*: yea so sensibly was he affected with the Evil of Sin, that he could shed Tears plentifully for the Sins of others. *Psal.* cxix. 136. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because Men keep not thy law*. In like manner *Jeremiah* tell us, that *his Soul did weep in secret places, for the pride and obstinacy of the Jews*; that *his eye did weep sore, and run down with tears*, *Jer.* xiii. 17. And so likewise St. Paul, *Philip.* iii. 18, 19. *There are many that walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies even to the Cross of Christ*. And there seems to be this natural Reason for it, that all great and permanent impressions upon the Mind, all deep inward resentments, have usually a proportionable Effect upon the Body, and the inferior Faculties.

But tho' this happen very frequently, yet it is not so constant and certain: For all Men have not the same Tenderness of Spirit, nor are equally prone to tears; nay, tho' a Man can weep upon natural accounts, as upon the Loss of a Child, or near Relation, or an intimate Friend, or when he lies under a sharp bodily Pain, yet a Man may truly repent, tho' he cannot express his Sorrow for Sin the same Way, provided he give Testimony of it by more real Effects: And therefore the Rule, which is commonly given by Casuists in this Case, seems to be more ensnaring than true and useful; namely, "That that Man that can shed Tears upon account of any evil less than that of Sin (as certainly all natural Evils are) ought to question the Truth of his Repentance for any Sin that he hath committed, if he cannot shed Tears for it." This I think is not true, because there is scarce any Man of so hard and unrelenting a Spirit, but the Loss of a kind Father, or a dear Child, or other near Relation, will force Tears from him: And yet such a Man, if it were to save his Soul, may not be able at some times to shed a Tear for his Sins. And the Reason is obvious; because Tears do proceed from a sensitive trouble, and are commonly the Product of a natural Affection; and therefore 'tis no wonder, if they flow more readily and easily upon a natural account;

count; because they are the Effect of a Cause suitable to their Nature. But Sorrow for Sin, which hath more of the Judgment and Understanding in it, hath not its Foundation in natural Affection, but in Reason; and therefore may not many times express it self in Tears, tho' it may produce greater and more proper Effects.

So that, upon the whole matter, I see no reason to call in question the Truth and Sincerity of that Man's Sorrow and Repentance, who hates Sin and forsakes it, and returns to God and his Duty, tho' he cannot shed Tears, and express the bitterness of his Soul for his Sin, by the same significations that a Mother doth in the loss of her only Son. He that cannot weep like a Child may resolve like a Man, and that undoubtedly will find acceptance with God. A learned Divine hath well illustrated this Matter by this Similitude. Two Persons walking together espy a Serpent, the one shrieks and cries out at the sight of it, the other kills it: So it is in Sorrow for Sin; some express it by great Lamentation and Tears, and vehement transports of Passion; others by greater and more real effects of hatred and detestation, by forsaking their Sins, and by mortifying and subduing their Lusts: but he that kills it does certainly best express his inward displeasure and enmity against it.

The Application I shall make of what hath been said upon this Argument, shall be in *two* particulars.

I. By way of Caution, and that against a double mistake about Sorrow for Sin.

1. Some look upon Trouble and Sorrow for Sin, as the whole of Repentance.
2. Others exact from themselves such a degree of Sorrow as ends in melancholy, and renders them unfit both for the Duties of Religion, and of their particular Calling. The first concerns almost the generality of Men; the latter but a very few in comparifon.

1. There are a great many, who look upon Trouble and Sorrow for their Sins, as the whole of Repentance, whereas it is but an Introduction to it. It is that which *works Repentance*; but is not Repentance it self. Repentance is always accompanied with Sorrow for Sin; but Sorrow for Sin does not always end in true Repentance: Sorrow only respects Sins past; but Repentance is chiefly preventive of Sin for the future. And God doth therefore require our Sorrow for Sin, in order to our forsaking of it. *Heb. vj. 1.* Repentance is there call'd *repentance from dead Works*. It is not only a Sorrow for them, but a turning from them.

There is no Reason why Men should be so willing to deceive themselves, for they are like to be the losers by it: But so we see it is, that many Men are contented to be deceived to their own ruin; and among many other ways, which Men have to cheat themselves, this is none of the least frequent, to think that if they can but shed a few tears for Sin upon a Death-bed, which no doubt they may easily do, when they see their Friends weeping about them, and apprehend themselves to be in imminent danger, not only of Death, but of that which is more terrible, the heavy Displeasure, and the fiery Indignation of Almighty God, *into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall*: I say, they think that if they can but do thus much, God will accept this for a true Repentance, and hereupon grant them Pardon and eternal Life. And upon these fond hopes, they adjourn their Repentance, and the Reformation of their Lives to a dying hour.

Indeed, if I were to speak to a Man upon his Death-bed, I would encourage him to a great Contrition and Sorrow for his Sins, as his last and only remedy, and the best thing he can do at that time; but on the other hand, when I am speaking to those that are well and in health, I dare not give them the least Encouragement to venture their Souls upon this, because it is an hazardous and almost desperate remedy; especially when Men have cunningly and designedly contrived to rob God of the Service of their Lives, and to put him off with a few unprofitable Sighs and Tears at their departure out of the World. Our Saviour tells us, that it is *not every one that shall say unto him Lord! Lord! that shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; and that there is a time when *many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able*.

The Sum of this Caution is, that Men should take heed of mistaking Sorrow for Sin for true Repentance, unless it be followed with the forsaking of Sin and the

the real Reformation of our Lives. *Abab* humbled himself, but we do not find that he was a true Penitent. *Judas* was sorry for his Sin, and yet for all that was *the Son of Perdition*. *Esau* is a sad Type of an ineffectual Sorrow for Sin, *Heb. xij.* Where the Apostle tells us, that *He found no place for Repentance*, that is, no way to change the mind of his Father *Isaac*, *tho' he sought it carefully with Tears*. If Sorrow for Sin were Repentance, there would be store of Penitents in Hell; for there is the deepest and most intense Sorrow, *weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth*.

2. Another Mistake which Men ought to be cautioned against in this Matter, is of those who exact from themselves such a Degree of Sorrow for Sin, as ends in deep melancholy, as renders them unfit both for the Duties of Religion, and of their particular Callings. But because there are but very few who fall into this mistake, I shall need to say the less to it. This only I shall say, that those who indulge their Sorrow to such a Degree, as to drown their Spirits, and to sink them into Melancholy and Mopishness, and thereby render themselves unserviceable to God, and unfit for the necessities of this Life, they commit one Sin more to mourn for, and overthrow the End of Repentance by the indiscreet use of the Means of it. For the End of Sorrow for Sin, is the forsaking of it and returning to our Duty: But he that sorrows for Sin, so as to unfit him for his Duty, defeats his own design, and destroys the End he aims at.

II. The other Part of the Application of this Discourse should be, to stir up this Affection of Sorrow in us. And here, if I had time, I might represent to you the great Evil of sin, and the infinite Danger and Inconvenience of it. If the holy Men in Scripture, *David* and *Jeremiah*, and *St. Paul*, were so deeply affected with the Sins of others, as to shed *rivers of Tears* at the Remembrance of them; how ought we to be touched with the Sense of our own Sins, who are equally concerned in the Dishonour brought to God by them, and infinitely more in the Danger they expose us to! Can we weep for our dead Friends? And have we no sense of that heavy load of Guilt, of that *body of Death*, which we carry about with us? Can we be sad and melancholy for temporal Losses and Sufferings, and *refuse to be comforted*? And is it no Trouble to us to have lost Heaven and Happiness, and to be in continual Danger of the intolerable Sufferings and endless Torments of another World?

I shall only offer to your Consideration, the great Benefit and Advantage which will redound to us from this godly Sorrow; *it worketh Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of*, saith *St. Paul*. If we would thus *sow in Tears*, we should *reap in Joy*. This Sorrow would but *continue for a time*, and in the Morning of the Resurrection there would be Joy to all Eternity, *Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*. It is but a very little while, and these *days of Mourning will be accomplish'd*; and then *all Tears shall be wiped from our Eyes*; and the *ransomed of the Lord shall come to Sion with Songs*, and *everlasting Joy shall be upon their Heads*. They shall obtain *Joy and Gladness*, and *Sorrow and Sighing shall flee away*. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*: but *woe unto you that laugh, for ye shall mourn and weep*. If Men will rejoice in the Pleasures of Sin, and *walk in the ways of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes*; if they will remove Sorrow from their heart, and put away all sad and melancholy Thoughts from them, and are resolved to harden their Spirits against the Sense of Sin, against the Checks and Convictions of their own Consciences, and the Suggestions of God's Holy Spirit, against all the Arguments that God can offer, and all the Methods that God can use to bring them to Repentance; let them *know, that for all these things God will bring them into Judgment*; and because they would not give way to a timely and seasonable Sorrow for Sin, they shall *lie down in eternal Sorrow*; *weeping and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth shall be their Portion for ever*. From which sad and miserable Estate, beyond all Imagination, and past all Remedy, God of his infinite Goodness deliver us all, for *Jesus Christ* his sake.

To whom, &c.

S E R M O N C V I I I .

The unprofitableness of Sin in this Life, an Argument for Repentance.

J O B XXXIII. 27. 28.

He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not : he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his Life shall see the Light.

THE great Folly and Perverseness of human Nature is in nothing more apparent than in this, that when in all other things Men are generally led and governed by their Interests, and can hardly be imposed upon by any Art, or persuaded by any Solicitation, to act plainly contrary to it; yet in matter of their Sin and Duty, that is, in that which of all other is of greatest concernment to them, they have little or no regard to it; but are so blinded and bewitched with the deceitfulness of Sin, as not to consider the infinite Danger and Disadvantage of it; and at the same time to cast the Commandments of God, and the Consideration of their own Happiness behind their backs.

And of this every Sinner, when *he comes to himself*, and considers what he hath done, is abundantly convinced; as appears by the Confession and Acknowledgment which is here in the Text put into the Mouth of a true Penitent; *I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, &c.*

In which Words here is a great Blessing and Benefit promised on God's part, and a Condition required on our part.

First, The Blessing or Benefit promised on God's part, which is Deliverance from the ill Consequences and Punishment of Sin; *he will deliver his Soul from going into the Pit, and his Life shall see the Light*; that is, he will deliver him from Death and Damnation. And though perhaps temporal Death be here immediately intended, yet that is a Type of our Deliverance from eternal Death; which is expressly promised in the Gospel.

Secondly, Here is the Condition required on our part; *If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not.* In which Words there are contained.

I. A penitent Confession of our Sins to God; for *he looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned*, that is, make a penitent Confession of his Sin to God.

II. A true Contrition for our Sin; not only for fear of the pernicious Consequences of Sin, and the Punishment that will follow it, implied in these Words, *and it profited me not*, this is but a very imperfect Contrition; but from a just Sense of the evil Nature of Sin, and the Fault and Offence of it against God, that we have done contrary to Right and our Duty. *If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right.* Here you see that true and perfect Contrition for our Sins, is made a necessary Condition of the Blessing and Benefit here promised, viz. Deliverance from the Punishment due to them.

III. Here is a Description of the evil Nature of Sin, it is *a perverting of that which is right*. Sin is a perverting of the Constitution and Appointment of God, and of the Nature and Order of things. God hath given Man a Law and Rule to walk by, but *the Foolishness of Man perverteth his way*. The great Lines of our Duty are plain and visible to all Men; and if we would attend to the Direction of our own Minds, concerning Good and Evil, every Man would be *a law to himself*.

self. He hath skew'd thee, O Man, what is good. That which is right and just and good, is plain and obvious, and offers it self first to us; and whenever we sin, we go out of the right Way that lies plain before us, and *turn aside into crooked paths.* But when we do that which is right, we act agreeably to the Design and Frame of our Beings, and comply with the true Nature and Order of Things; we do what becomes us, and are what we ought to be: but Sin perverts the Nature of Things, and puts them out of course; *I have sinned and perverted that which was right.*

IV. You have here an Acknowledgment of the mischievous and pernicious Consequences of Sin; *I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not.* Which last Words are a *μείωσις*, in which much less is said than is meant and intended; *It profited me not*, that is, it was so far from being of Advantage, that the Effects and Consequences of it were very pernicious and destructive.

And this is not only true as to the final Issue, and Event of an Evil course in the other World, but I shall endeavour to shew, that even in respect of this World, and the present Life, the Practice of some Sins is plainly mischievous to the temporal Interests of Men, that others are wholly unprofitable; and that those which pretend to bring some benefit and advantage, will, when all accounts are cast up, and all circumstances duly weighed and considered, be found to do far otherwise.

First, I shall shew, that the Practice of some Vices is evidently mischievous and prejudicial to us, as to this World; as all those Vices which fall under the Cognizance of human Laws, and are punish'd by them, Murder, Theft, Perjury, Sedition, Rebellion, and the like; these cannot be denied to be of pernicious Consequence to Men, and therefore the great Patrons of Vice seldom plead for these, the Inconvenience of them is so palpable, that some feel it, and all may see it every Day.

But besides these, there are many other sorts of Sin which human Laws either take no notice of, or do not so severely punish, which yet in their natural Consequences are very pernicious to our present Interest; either they are a Disturbance to our Minds, or dangerous to our Health, or ruinous to our Estate, or hurtful to our Reputation, or it may be at once prejudicial to us in all, or most of these respects; and these are the greatest temporal Inconveniencies that Men are liable to.

All irregular Passions, as Wrath, Malice, Envy, Impatience and Revenge, are not only a Disturbance to ourselves, but they naturally draw upon us Hatred and Contempt from others. Any one of these Passions is enough to render a Man uneasy to himself, and to make his Conversation disgustful and troublesome to all that are about him; for all Men naturally hate all those who are of an envious, or malicious, or revengeful Temper, and are apt to rise up and stand upon their guard against them. Anger and Impatience are great Deformities of the Mind, and make a Man look as ugly, as if he had a wry and distorted Countenance; and these Passions are apt to breed in others a secret Contempt of us, and to bring our Prudence into question, because they are Signs of a weak and impotent Mind, that either hath lost, or never had the Government of it self.

There are other Vices which are plainly pernicious to our health, and do naturally bring Pains and Diseases upon Men: such are Intemperance and Lust: And tho' some may pretend to govern themselves, in the Practice of these, with so much moderation and discretion as to prevent the notorious bad Consequences of them, yet there are very few or none that do so: This is seldom more than a Speculation, and Men that allow themselves in any lewd or intemperate Course, will find it very hard to govern themselves in it; for after Men have forfeited their Innocence, and broke in upon their natural Modesty, they are apt by degrees to grow profligate and desperate. If a Man gives way but little to his own vicious Inclinations, they will soon get head of him, and no Man knows how far they will hurry him at last.

Besides that the Vices I am speaking of, Intemperance and Lust, have other great Inconveniencies attending them, they expose Men more frequently than most other Vices, to occasions of quarrel, in which Men often lose their own lives, or take

take away other Mens, by which they fall under the Danger of the Law, and the stroke of publick Justice; or if they escape that (as too often they do) they cannot fly from their own Consciences, which do commonly fill them with the Horror and Torment of such an Action all their days; so pernicious are the usual Consequences of these Vices, of which we see sad Instances every day.

Nor are these Vices less hurtful to Mens Estates; for they are extremely expensive and wasteful, and usually make Men careless of all their business and concerns, liable to be cheated by those whom they are forced to trust with their Affairs, because they will not mind them themselves, and to be abused by crafty Men, who watch the Opportunities of their Folly and Weakness, to draw them into foolish bargains. It is an old Observation, that more Men perish by Intemperance, than by the Sword; and I believe it is as true, that more Estates are dissipated and wasted by these two riotous Vices, than by all other Accidents whatsoever.

And there is scarce any notorious Vice, by which Men do not greatly suffer in their Reputation and good Name, even when the times are worst and most degenerate; any wicked course, whether of debauchery or injustice, is a Blemish to a Man's Credit, not only in the Esteem of the Sober and Virtuous, but even of those who are loose and extravagant; for Men are sooner brought to practise what is bad, than to approve of it, and do generally think all sin and wickedness to be a stain upon them, whatever in a swaggering humour they may say to the contrary. A clear evidence of this is, that Men do so studiously endeavour to conceal their Vices, and are so careful that as few as may be should be conscious to them, and are so confounded if they be discover'd, and so out of all patience when they are upbraided with them; a plain acknowledgment, that these things are shameful in themselves, and whatever face Men may put upon things, that they do inwardly and at the bottom of their Hearts believe, that these Practices are deservedly of bad Reputation, and do, in the general opinion of Mankind, leave a blot upon them.

Secondly, There are other Sins, which tho' they are not usually attended with Consequences so palpably mischievous, yet are plainly unprofitable, and bring no manner of Advantage to Men.

Of this Sort is all kind of Prophaneness, and customary Swearing in common Conversation; there is neither Profit nor Pleasure in them. What doth the prophane Man get by his contempt of Religion? He is neither more respected nor better trusted for this quality; but on the contrary, it is many times really to his prejudice, and brings a great odium upon him, not only from those who sincerely love Religion, but from others also; tho' they are conscious to themselves that they do not love Religion as they ought, yet they have a Veneration for it, and cannot endure that any one should speak slightly of it.

And 'tis as hard to imagine where the Pleasure of Prophaneness lies. Men cannot but at first have a great reluctancy in their minds against it, and must offer considerable violence to themselves, to bring themselves to it; and when it is grown more familiar, and their Consciences are become more fear'd and insensible, yet whenever they are alone and serious, or when any Affliction or Calamity is upon them, they are full of fears and anguish, their guilt stares them in the face, and their Consciences are raging and furious.

And as all kind of Prophaneness is unprofitable, so more especially customary Swearing in ordinary Conversation, upon every occasion of Passion, or any other trivial cause, nay, it may be without cause, out of mere habit and custom. Now what can possibly be imagined to be the Profit or Pleasure of this Vice? Sensual Pleasure in it there can be none, because it is not founded in the temper of the Body; a Man may be naturally prone to Anger or Lust; but no Man I think is born with a swearing Constitution.

And there is as little Profit as Pleasure in it; for the common and trivial use of Oaths makes them perfectly insignificant to their end, and is so far from giving credit to a Man's Word, that it rather weakens the Reputation of it.

Thirdly, Those Vices which pretend to be of Advantage to us, when all Accompts are cast up, and all Circumstances duly consider'd, will be found to be quite otherwise. Some Vices pretend to bring in Profit, others to yield Pleasure; but up-

on a thorough examination of the matter these Pretences will vanish and come to nothing.

The Vices which pretend to be most profitable are Covetousness and Oppression, Fraud and Falshood, and Perfidiousness: but if we look well into them, we shall find that either they do not bring the Advantages they pretend to bring; or that the Inconveniencies which attend them are as great; or greater than the Advantages they bring; or else that the Practice of the opposite Virtues would be of much greater Advantage to us.

1. Some of these Vices do not bring the Advantages they pretend to do. Covetousness may increase a Man's Estate, but it adds nothing to his Happiness and Contentment: for though his Estate grow never so much, his want is still as great as it was before, and his care and trouble continually greater; so that so long as he continues Covetous, the more Rich, the less Happy.

And then for Fraud and Falshood; they are not of that real and lasting Advantage, that cunning but short-sighted Men are apt to imagine. Nothing is truer than that of Solomon, *The lying tongue is but for a moment.* A Man can practise the Arts of Falshood and Deceit but for a little while, before they will be discovered; and when they are discovered, they are so far from being any Advantage to him, that they turn to his prejudice, and the cunning Man begins to be in a bad case, and he that was wont to over-reach others, is at last caught himself.

2. Several of these Vices are attended with Inconveniencies as great or greater than the Advantages they bring. If a Man increase his Estate by Injustice and Oppression, yet he loseth his Reputation. Besides that all fraudulent and unjust courses are apt to entangle a Man in a great many Inconveniencies, and to expose him to troublesome Suits, for the keeping of what he hath unjustly gotten; it is very often seen, that what is gotten by Injustice is spent in Law; and though it may be those whom he hath wronged never recover their right, yet first or last the unjust Man is put to more trouble and vexation about it than the thing is worth. This Solomon observes, *Prov. xv. 6. In the revenue of the wicked there is trouble.*

The perfidious Man by betraying a Friend or a Trust, may perhaps make some present Advantage: but then by such a Villainy he makes himself odious to all Mankind, and by this means, at one time or other, prevents himself of greater advantages which he might have had another way; and perhaps at last is miserably crush'd by those whom he betrayed, who in the change and revolution of human Affairs, may some time or other have the opportunity of being revenged. Or else,

3. The Practice of the opposite Virtues would be of far greater Advantage to us.

Truth and Fidelity are in common experience found to be a better and surer way of thriving, and more like to last and hold out than Fraud and Falshood; and as Honesty is a surer way of raising an Estate, so it brings along with it greater security of the quiet enjoyment of it. There is never any real occasion, and seldom any colour and pretence of bringing such a Man into trouble; for which reason Solomon says, *Better is the little which the righteous Man hath, than great possessions without right:* because tho' it be but little, yet it will wear like Steel, and he is like to enjoy it quietly, and may increase it; whereas the unjust Man is continually in danger of losing what he hath gotten.

And if this be the case, it is very plain, that those Vices which pretend to bring the greatest Advantage, are really unprofitable; and to these kind of Vices the Text seems to point more particularly; *If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which is right, and it profited me not, &c.*

But perhaps, tho' there be no profit in any sinful course, yet there may be some pleasure. That comes next to be examined; and I doubt not to make it evident, that there is no such pleasure in Sin, as can make it a reasonable Temptation to any Man to venture upon it. The Vices which pretend to bring the greatest pleasure, are Lewdness, and Intemperance, and Revenge.

The two first of these are the highest Pretenders to Pleasure: but God knows, and the Sinner himself knows, how thin and transitory this Pleasure is, how much trouble attends it, and how many sighs and groans follow it; and whatever Pleasure

sure they may minister to the sense, they bring a great deal of anguish and perplexity to the mind; so that the Trouble which they cause, does more than countervail the Pleasure which they bring; and they do not only disturb the Mind, but they disease the Body. How many are there, who for the gratifying of an inordinate Lust, and for the incomprehensible Pleasure of a drunken fit, have endured the violent burnings of a Fever, or else have consumed the remainder of their days in languishing Sickness and Pain?

And the reason of all this is plain, because all the Pleasures of Sin are violent, and forced, and unnatural, and therefore not like to continue; they are founded in some Disease and Distemper of our Minds, and therefore always end in pain and smart.

And as for Revenge; it is indeed a very eager and impatient desire: but so far surely from being a Pleasure, that the very thoughts of it are extremely troublesome, and raise as great storms in the mind of a Man, as any Passion whatsoever; and I never heard of the Pleasure of being in a storm; it is pleasant indeed to be out of it, when others are in it. And when Revenge hath satisfied it self, and laid its Enemy bleeding at its foot, the Man that executed it commonly repents himself the next moment, and would give all the World to undo what he hath done; so that if there be any Pleasure in Revenge, it is so flitting, and of so short a continuance, that we know not where to fix it; for there is nothing but tumult and rage before the execution of it, and after it nothing but remorse and horror; so that if it be a Pleasure, it is but of one moment's continuance, and lasts no longer than the act is a doing; and what Man in his wits would purchase so short a Pleasure at so dear a price? This is most certainly true, and if it were well considered, sufficient to convince any reasonable Man of the unreasonableness of this Passion.

Cain is a fearful Instance of this kind, who after he had drawn his Brother into the Field and slain him there, how was he tormented with the guilt of what he had done, and forced to cry out, *my punishment is greater than I can bear*; or (as some Translations render the Words) *mine iniquity is greater than that it can be forgiven!* Gen. iv. 13. *From thy face* (says he to God, in the anguish of his Soul) *shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me,* V. 14. *Every one that findeth me*, how fearful did his guilt make him! when probably there was then but one Man in the World besides himself. And I may say of this sort of Men as St. Jude does of those in his time, *Jude v. 11. Wo unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain*, they are guilty of his Crime, and his doom shall be theirs.

And here I cannot but take notice of a great Evil that grows daily upon us, and therefore deserves with the greatest severity to be discountenanced and punish'd; I mean that of Duels, than which what can be more unchristian? And what can be more unreasonable, than for Men upon deliberation, and after the heat of Passion is over, to resolve to sheath their Swords in one another's Bowels, only for a hasty Word? And which is yet more unreasonable, that because two Men are angry, and have quarrel'd with one another, and will fight it out, that therefore two more, who have no quarrel, no kind of displeasure against one another, must fight too, and kill one another if they can, for no reason, and upon no provocation. These false Rules of Honour will not pass in another World in the highest and greatest Court of Honour, from whence there is no Appeal.

I shall conclude this whole Argument with that excellent Saying of Cato, reported in A. Gellius, *Cogitate cum animis vestris*, &c. "Consider (says he) with your selves, if ye be at any trouble and pain to do a good action, the Trouble will be soon over; but the Pleasure and Comfort of what ye have done well, abides with you all your days: but if to gratify your selves, you do any thing that is wicked, the Pleasure will quickly vanish; but the Guilt of it will stick by you for ever."

And is it not then much better to prevent all this trouble, by denying our selves these sinful Pleasures, which will follow us with guilt whilst we live, and fill us with horror and despair when we come to die?

I shall now make some reflections upon what has been delivered, and so conclude.

First, What has been said upon this Argument ought particularly to move those who have so great a consideration of this present Life, and the temporal Happiness of it, that the Practice of all Virtues is a Friend to their temporal, as well as eternal welfare, and all Vice is an Enemy to both.

Secondly, This likewise takes off all manner of excuse from Sin and Vice. It pretends not to serve the Soul, and to profit our future Happiness in another World; and if it be an Enemy also to our present welfare in this World, what is there to be said for it?

Thirdly, (which I desire to insist a little longer upon) All the Arguments which I have used to convince Men of the folly of a wicked course, are so many strong and unanswerable Reasons for Repentance; for when a Man is convinced, that he hath done foolishly, and to his own prejudice, that *he hath sinned, and that it profited him not*, what can he do less, than to be heartily sorry for it, and ashamed of it, and resolved to do better for the future? Nothing surely is more reasonable than Repentance; and yet how hard is it to bring Men to it? Either Men will mistake the Nature of it, and not do it effectually; or they will delay it, and not do it in time.

I. Men mistake the Nature of Repentance; and there are *two* great Mistakes about it.

1. Of those who make the great force and virtue of it to consist, not so much in the Resolution of the Penitent, as in the Absolution of the Priest. And this the Church of *Rome*, in their Doctrine concerning Repentance, does. For their Sacrament of Penance (as they call it) they make to consist of two parts; the Matter of it, which consists in these three Acts of the Penitent, Confession, Contrition, and Satisfaction; and the Form of it, which is the Absolution of the Priest, in which they make the main virtue and force of Repentance to consist; *in quâ præcipue ipsius vis fita est*, are the very Words of the Council of *Trent*.

And here is a wide difference betwixt us; for tho' the comfort of the Penitent may in some case consist in the Absolution of the Priest, yet the Virtue and Efficacy of Repentance does not at all consist in it, but wholly in the Contrition and sincere Resolution of the Penitent, as the Scripture every where declares: and to think otherwise is of dangerous Consequence; because it encourageth Men to hope for the benefit of Repentance, that is, the Pardon and Forgiveness of their Sins, without having truly repented. And indeed the Council of *Trent* have so framed their Doctrines in this point, that any one may see, that they did not matter how much they abated on the part of the Penitent, provided the Power of the Priest be but advanced, and kept up in its full height.

2. The other Mistake is of those who make Repentance to consist in the bare Resolution of Amendment, tho' it never has its effect; that is, tho' the Sinner either do not what he resolved, or do it only for a fit, and during his present Trouble and Conviction.

There is one case indeed, and but one, wherein a Resolution not brought to effect is available, and that is, when nothing hinders the performance and execution of it, but only want of time and opportunity for it, when the Repentance is sincere, and the Resolution real, but the Man is cut off between the actual Reformation which he intended, and which God who sees things certainly in their Causes, knows would have followed, if the Man had lived to give Demonstration of it. But this is nothing to those who have the opportunity to make good their Resolution, and do not; for, because the Resolution which would have been perform'd, had there been time and opportunity, is reckon'd for a true Repentance, and accepted of God, as if it had been done; therefore the Resolution which was not brought to effect when there was time and opportunity for it, hath not the nature of true Repentance, nor will it be accepted of God.

I will add but one thing more upon this Head, because I doubt it is not always sufficiently considered; and that is this, That a sincere Resolution of a better course, does imply a Resolution of the means, as well as of the end: He that is truly resolved against any Sin, is likewise resolved against the occasions and temptations that would lead and draw him to it; otherwise he hath taken up a rash and foolish Resolution, which he is not like to keep, because he did not resolve upon that which was necessary to the keeping of it. So he that resolves upon any

part of his Duty, must likewise resolve upon the means which are necessary to the Discharge and Performance of it; he that is resolved to be just in his dealing, and to pay his debts, must be diligent in his Calling, and mind his business; because without this he cannot do the other; for nothing can be more vain and fond, than for a Man to pretend that he is resolved upon doing his Duty, when he neglects any thing that is necessary to put him into a capacity, and to further him in the discharge of it. This is as if a Man should resolve to be well, and yet never take Physick, or be careless in observing the Rules which are prescribed in order to his Health. So for a Man to resolve against Drunkenness, and yet to run himself upon the temptations which naturally lead to it, by frequenting the Company of lewd and intemperate Persons, this is as if a Man should resolve against the Plague, and run into the Pest-House. Whatever can reasonably move a Man to be resolved upon any End, will, if his Resolution be wise and honest, determine him as strongly to use the Means which are proper and necessary to that End.

These are the common Mistakes about this matter, which Men are the more willing to run into, because they are loath to be brought to a true Repentance; the Nature whereof is not difficult to be understood, (for nothing in the World is plainer;) only Men are always slow to understand what they have no mind to put in practice. But,

II. Besides these Mistakes about Repentance, there is another great Miscarriage in this matter, and that is the delay of Repentance; Men are loath to set about it, and therefore they put it upon the last hazard, and resolve then to huddle it up as well as they can: but this certainly is great folly, to be still making more work for Repentance, because it is to create so much needless trouble and vexation to our selves; 'tis to go on still in playing a foolish part, in hopes to retrieve all by an after-game; this is extremely dangerous, because we may certainly sin, but it is not certain we shall repent; our Repentance may be prevented, and we may be cut off in our Sins; but if we should have space for it, Repentance may in process of time grow an hundred times more difficult than it is at present.

But if it were much more certain, and more easy than it is, if it were nothing but a hearty Sorrow and Shame for our Sins, and an asking God forgiveness for them, without being put to the trouble of reforming our wicked lives, yet this were great folly, to do those things which will certainly grieve us after we have done them, and put us to shame, and to ask forgiveness for them. It was well said of old Cato, *Næ tu stultus es hominibus, qui malis veniam precari, quàm non peccare; thou art a foolish man indeed, who chooseth rather to ask forgiveness, than not to offend.*

At the best, Repentance implies a fault; it is an after-wisdom, which supposeth a Man first to have plaid the fool; it is but the best end of a bad business; a hard shift, and a desperate hazard, which a Man that had acted prudently would never have been put to; it is a Plaister after we have dangerously wounded our selves: but certainly it had been much wiser, to have prevented the danger of the wound, and the pain of curing it. A wise Man would not make himself sick if he could; or if he were already so, would not make himself sicker, tho' he had the most effectual and infallible Remedy in the World in his power: But this is not the case of a Sinner, for Repentance as well as Faith is the Gift of God.

Above all, let me caution you not to put off this great and necessary Work to the most unseasonable time of all other, the time of sickness and death, upon a fond presumption, that you can be reconciled to God when you please, and exercise such a Repentance as will make your peace with him at any time.

I am heartily afraid, that a very great part of Mankind do miscarry upon this confidence, and are swallowed up in the gulph of Eternal Perdition with this Plank in their Arms. The common Custom is, (and I fear it is too common) when the Physician has given over his Patient, then, and not till then, to send for the Minister; not so much to enquire into the Man's condition, and to give him suitable Advice, as to minister Comfort, and to speak Peace to him at a venture.

But let me tell you, that herein you put an extreme difficult task upon us, in expecting that we should pour Wine and Oil into the Wound before it be searched,

ed, and speak smooth and comfortable things to a Man that is but just brought to a sense of the long course of a lewd and wicked Life impenitently continued in. Alas! what comfort can we give to Men in such a case? We are loath to drive them to despair; and yet we must not destroy them by presumption; pity and good nature do strongly tempt us to make the best of their case, and to give them all the little hopes which with any kind of Reason we can, and God knows it is but very little that we can give to such Persons, upon good ground; for it all depends upon the degree and sincerity of their Repentance, which God only knows, and we can but guess at. We can easily tell them what they ought to have done, and what they should do if they were to live longer, and what is the best that they can do in those streights into which they have brought themselves, *viz.* to exercise as deep a Sorrow and Repentance for their Sins as is possible, and to cry mightily to God for mercy, in and through the Merit of our Blessed Saviour. But how far this will be available in these Circumstances, we cannot tell; because we do not know whether if the Man had lived longer, this Repentance and these Resolutions which he now declares of a better course would have been good.

And after all is done that can be done in so short a time, and in such Circumstances of confusion and disorder, as commonly attend dying Persons, I doubt the result of all will be this; that there is much more ground of fear than hope concerning them; nay, perhaps, while we are pressing the dying Sinner to Repentance, and he is bungling about it, he expires in great doubt and perplexity of mind, what will become of him? or if his Eyes be closed with more comfortable hopes of his condition, the next time he opens them again, he may find his fearful mistake, like the rich Man in the Parable, who when he was in hell, *lift up his eyes, being in torment.*

This is a very dismal and melancholy consideration, and commands all Men presently to repent, and not to put off the main work of their lives to the end of them, and the time of Sickneſs and old Age. Let us not offer up a Carcase to God instead of a living and acceptable Sacrifice: but let us turn to God, in the days of our health and strength, *before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, of which we shall say we have no pleasure in them; before the Sun and the Moon and the Stars be darkned;* as Solomon elegantly expresseth it, *Eccles. xii. 1, 2.* before all the Comforts of Life be gone, before our Faculties be all ceased and spent, before our Understandings be too weak, and our Wills too strong; our Understandings be too weak for consideration and the deliberate exercise of Repentance, and our Wills too strong and stiff to be bent and bowed to it.

Let us not deceive our selves, Heaven is not an Hospital made to receive all Sick and Aged Persons that can but put up a faint request to be admitted there; no, no, they are never like to *see the Kingdom of God*, who instead of *seeking it in the first place*, make it their *last refuge and retreat*: and when they find the Sentence of Death upon them, only to avoid present Execution, do bethink themselves of getting to Heaven, and since there is no other Remedy, are contented to petition the great King and Judge of the World, that they may be *transported thither.*

Upon all these Considerations, let us use no delay in a matter of such mighty consequence to our eternal Happiness, but let the *counsel* which was given to *Nebuchadnezzar* be acceptable to us; let us *break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if so be it may be a lengthening of our tranquillity.* Repentance and Alms do well together; let us *break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor;* especially upon this great occasion, which his Majesty's great Goodness to those distressed Strangers, that have taken Sanctuary among us, hath lately presented us withal, *remembering that we also are in the body, and liable to the like Sufferings;* and considering on the one hand that gracious Promise of our Lord, *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy;* and on the other hand, that terrible Threatening in *St. James, He shall have Judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.*

To conclude from all that hath been said, let us take up a present Resolution of a better course, and enter immediately upon it, *to day whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. O that men were wise, that they*

they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! And grant we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we may all know and do, in this our day, the things which belong to our peace, for thy mercy's sake in Jesus Christ. To whom with thee O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory now and for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N CIX.

The Shamefulness of Sin, an Argument for Repentance.

R O M. VI. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is Death. But now being made free from sin, and become Servants to God, ye have your fruit unto Holiness, and the end Everlasting Life.

THERE are two Passions which do always in some Degree or other accompany a true Repentance, *viz.* Sorrow and Shame for our Sins; because these are necessary to engage Men to a Resolution of making that change wherein Repentance does consist: For till we are heartily sorry for what we have done, and ashamed of the evil of it, it is not likely that we should ever come to a firm and steady purpose of forsaking our evil ways, and betaking our selves to a better course.

And these two Passions of Sorrow and Shame for our Sins, were wont anciently to be signified by those outward expressions of Humiliation and Repentance, which we find so frequently mentioned in Scripture, of *being clothed in Sackcloth*, as a testimony of our sorrow and mourning for our Sins, and of *being sprinkled upon the head, and covered over with filth and dirt, with dust and ashes*, in token of our shame and confusion of Face for all our Iniquities and Transgressions. Hence are those Expressions in Scripture of *repenting in Sackcloth and Ashes, of lying down in our shame, and being covered with confusion*, in token of their great sorrow and shame for the manifold and heinous Sins which they have been guilty of.

Of the former of these, *viz.* Trouble and Sorrow for our Sins, I have very lately * treated; and of the latter, I intend now by God's assistance to speak, *viz.* * Serm. Shame for our Sins, and that from these Words which I have recited to you; *What* cvii. *fruit had ye then in those things? &c.* In which Words the Apostle makes a comparison between an holy and virtuous, and a sinful and vicious course of Life, and sets before us a perfect enumeration of the manifest Inconveniencies of the one, and the manifold Advantages of the other.

First, The manifest Inconveniencies of a vicious and sinful Course; and the Apostle mentions these *three*.

I. It is unprofitable, it brings no manner of present Benefit and Advantage to us; if all things be rightly calculated and considered. *What fruit had ye then in those things? Then (i. e.)* at the time when you committed those Sins, had you any present Advantage by them? No, certainly; but quite contrary.

II. The reflection upon our Sins afterwards is cause of shame and confusion to us; *What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?*

III. The final issue and consequence of these things is very dismal and miserable; *The end of those things is death.* Let us put these things together, and see what they amount to? No fruit then when ye did these things, and shame now when ye come afterwards to reflect upon them, and death and misery at the last.

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Secondly, Here is likewise on the other hand represented to us the manifold Benefits of an Holy and Virtuous Life. And that upon these *two* accounts,

I. Of the present Benefit of it, which the Apostle calls here; *fruit*; *Ye have your fruit unto Holiness.*

II. In respect of the future Reward of it; *And the end everlasting Life.* Here is a considerable earnest in hand, and a mighty recompence afterwards, infinitely beyond the proportion of our best Actions and Services, both in respect of the greatness and the duration of it, *Everlasting Life*; for a few transient and very imperfect actions of obedience, a perfect and immutable and endless state of Happiness. I shall begin with the

First of the *two* general Heads, *viz.* The manifest Inconveniencies of a Sinful and Vicious course; and the Apostle I told you in the Text takes notice of *three*.

I. It is unprofitable, and if all things be rightly calculated and consider'd, it brings no manner of present Advantage and Benefit to us. *What fruit had ye then in those things? Then (i. e.)* When ye committed those Sins, had you any present Advantage by them? No certainly, quite the contrary; as if the Apostle had said, if you seriously reflect upon your former course of Impiety and Sin, wherein you have continued so long, you cannot but acknowledge that it brought no manner of Advantage to you; and when all Accompts are truly cast up, you must, if you will confess the Truth, own that you were in no sort gainers by it: For the Words are a *μειωσις*, and the Apostle plainly intends more than he expresseth, *What fruit had ye then in those things? (i. e.)* The wicked course which ye formerly lived in, was so far from being any ways beneficial to you, that it was on the contrary upon all accounts extremely to your prejudice and disadvantage.

And this is not only true in respect of the final Issue and Consequence of a Sinful and Vicious course of Life, that no Man is a gainer by it at the long run; and if we take into our consideration another World, and the dreadful and endless misery which a wicked and impenitent Life will then plunge Men into, (which in the farther Handling of this Text will at large be spoken to, being the last of the *three* Particulars under this *first* general head :) But it is true likewise, even in respect of this world, and with regard only to this present and temporal Life, without looking so far as the future Recompence and Punishment of Sin in another World.

And this would plainly appear, by an Induction of these *three* Particulars.

1. It is evident that some Sins are plainly mischievous to the temporal Interest of Men, as tending either to the disturbance of their Minds, or the endangering of their Health and Lives, or to the prejudice of their Estates, or the blasting of them in their Reputation and good Name.

2. That there are other Sins, which tho' they are not so visibly burdened and attended with mischievous Consequences, yet they are plainly unprofitable, and bring no manner of real Advantage to Men, either in respect of Gain or Pleasure; such are the Sins of Prophaneness, and customary Swearing in common Conversation.

3. That even those Sins and Vices which make the fairest pretence to be of Advantage to us, when all Accompts are cast up, and all Circumstances duly weigh'd and consider'd, will be found to be but Pretenders, and in no degree able to perform and make good what they so largely promise beforehand, when they tempt us to the commission of them. There are some Vices which pretend to bring in great Profit, and tempt worldly-minded Men, whose Minds are disposed to catch at that bait; such are the Sins of Covetousness and Oppression, of Fraud and Falshood and Perfidiousness. And there are others which pretend to bring Pleasure along with them, which is almost an irresistible temptation to voluptuous and sensual Men; such are the Sins of Revenge, and Intemperance, and Lust. But upon a particular examination of each of these, it will evidently appear, that there is no such Profit or Pleasure in any of these Vices, as can be a reasonable temptation to any Man to fall in love with them, and to engage in the Commission and Practice of them. But I shall not now enlarge upon any of these, having lately discours'd upon them from another Text. I shall therefore proceed to the

II. Inconvenience which I mentioned of a sinful and vicious Course, *viz.* that the reflection upon our Sins afterwards, is cause of great Shame and Confusion to us

us. *What fruit had you then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?* And this is a very proper Argument for this Season*; because the Passion of Shame, as it is a natural and useful Consequent of Sin, so it is a Disposition necessarily required to a true Repentance. * Preach'd in Lent.

Most Men when they commit a known Fault are apt to be ashamed, and ready to blush whenever they are put in mind of it, and charged with it. Some Persons indeed have gone so far in Sin, and have waded so deep in a vicious Course, as to be confirmed and harden'd in their wickedness to that degree, as to be past all Shame, and almost all Sense of their Faults; especially in regard of the more common and ordinary Vices, which are in vogue and fashion, and in the commission whereof they are countenanc'd and encourag'd by Company and Example. Such were those of whom the Prophet speaks, *Jer. vi. 15. Were they ashamed, when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.*

But yet even these Persons, when they come to be sensible of their guilt, so as to be brought to Repentance, they cannot then but be ashamed of what they have done. For what face soever Men may set upon their Vices, Sin is shameful in it self, and so apt to fill Men with *confusion of face*, when they seriously reflect upon it, that they cannot harden their Foreheads against all sense of Shame. And whatever Men may declare to the contrary, this is tacitly acknowledged by the generality of Men, in that they are so solicitous and careful to conceal their Faults from the Eyes of others, and to keep them as secret as they can; and whenever they are discovered and laid open, 'tis matter of great Trouble and Confusion to them; and if any one happen to upbraid and twit them with their Miscarriages of any kind, they cannot bear with Patience to hear of them.

There are indeed some few such Prodigies and Monsters of Men, as are able after great strugglings with their Consciences, to force themselves to boast impudently of their Wickedness, and *to glory in their shame*; not because they do really and inwardly believe their Vices to be an Honour and Glory to them, but because, conscious to themselves that they have done shameful things, and believing that others know it, they put on a *Whore's Forehead*, and think to prevent the upbraiding of others, by owning what they have done, and seeming to glory in it: But yet for all that, these Persons, if they would confess the Truth, do feel some Confusion in themselves, and they are inwardly sensible of the Infamy and Reproach of such Actions, for all they would seem to the World to bear it out so well: For when all is done, there is a wide Difference between the Impudence of a Criminal, and the Confidence and Assurance of a clear Conscience, that is fully satisfied of its own Innocence and Integrity. The conscientious Man is not ashamed of any thing that he hath done: but the impudent Sinner only seems not to be so, but all the while feels a great deal of Confusion in his own Mind. The one is sensible and satisfied that there is no cause for Shame; the other is conscious to himself that there is cause, but he offers Violence to himself, and suppresses all he can the sense and shew of it, and will needs face down the World, that he hath no Guilt and Regret in his own Mind for any thing that he hath done.

Now that Sin is truly matter of Shame, will be very evident, if we consider these *two* things.

First, If we consider the Nature of this Passion of Shame.

Secondly, If we consider what there is in Sin which gives real ground and occasion for it.

First, For the Nature of this Passion. Shame is the Trouble or Confusion of Mind, occasioned by something that tends to our Disgrace and Dishonour, to our Infamy and Reproach. Now there is nothing truly and really matter of Shame and Reproach to us, but what we our selves have done, or have been some way or other accessory to the doing of, by our own fault or neglect, and by consequence what it was in our Power and Choice not to have done: For no Man is ashamed of what he is sure he could not help. Necessity, unless it be wilful and contracted, and happens through some precedent occasion and fault of our own, does take away all just cause of Shame.

And nothing likewise is matter of Shame, but something which we ought not to do, which misbecomes us, and is below the Dignity and Perfection of our Na-

ture, and is against some Duty and Obligation that is upon us to the contrary; and consequently is a Reproach to our Reason and Understanding, a Reflection upon our Prudence and Discretion, and at first Sight hath an Appearance of Ruggedness and Deformity.

And all Actions of this Nature do receive several Aggravations, with respect to the Persons against whom, and in whose Presence, and under whose Eye and Knowledge these shameful things are done. Now I shall shew in the

Second place, That Sin contains in it whatsoever is justly accounted infamous, together with all the Aggravations of Shame and Reproach that can be imagined. And this will appear by considering Sin and Vice in these *two* respects:

I. In relation to our selves.

II. In respect to God, against whom, and in whose Sight it is committed.

I. In relation to our selves, there are these *four* things which make Sin and Vice to be very shameful.

1. The natural Ruggedness and Deformity of it.

2. That it is so great a Dishonour to our Nature, and to the Dignity and Excellency of our Being.

3. That it is so great a Reproach to our Reason and Understanding, and so foul a Reflection upon our Prudence and Discretion.

4. That it is our own voluntary Act and Choice.

Every one of these Considerations render it very shameful, and all of them together ought to fill the Sinner with *Confusion of face*. I shall speak to them severally.

1. The natural Ruggedness and Deformity of Sin and Vice render it very shameful. Men are apt to be ashamed of any thing in them, or belonging to them, that looks ugly and monstrous, and therefore they endeavour with great Care and Art to conceal and dissemble their Deformity in any kind. How strangely do we see Men concerned with all their Diligence and Skill, to cover and palliate any Defect or Deformity in their Bodies; an ill Face, if they could; however, a foul and bad Complexion, or a blind or squinting Eye, a crooked Body, or Limb, or whatever is ill-favour'd or monstrous. Now in regard of our Souls and better part, Sin hath all the Monstrousness and Deformity in it which we can imagine in the Body, and much more: And it is as hard to be covered from the Eye of discerning Men, as the Deformity of the Body is; but impossible to be conceal'd from the Eye of God, to whom *Darkness and Light*, secret and open are all one. But then the moral Defects and Deformities of the Mind have this Advantage above the natural Defects and Deformities of the Body, that the former are possible to be cured by the Grace of God, in conjunction with our own Care and Endeavour: Whereas no Diligence or Skill can ever help or remove many of the natural Defects and Deformities of the Body.

Sin is the blindness of our Minds, the perverseness and crookedness of our Wills, and the monstrous irregularity and disorder of our Affections and Appetites; it is the mis-placing of our Powers and Faculties, the setting of our Wills and Passions above our Reason; all which is ugly and unnatural, and if we were truly sensible of it, matter of great Shame and Reproach to us.

There is hardly any Vice but at first Sight hath an odious and ugly Appearance to a well disciplin'd and innocent Mind, that hath never had any Acquaintance with it. And however Familiarity and Custom may abate the sense of its Deformity, yet it is as it was before, and the change that is made in us, does not alter the nature of the thing. Drunkenness and furious Passion, Pride and Falshood, Covetousness and Cruelty, are odious, and matter of Shame, in the sincere and uncorrupted Opinion of all Mankind. And though a Man, by the frequent Practice of any of these Vices, and a long familiarity with them, may not be so sensible of the Deformity of them in himself, yet he quickly discerns the Uglinefs of them in others, whenever they come in his way, and could with Salt and Sharpness enough upbraid those whom he sees guilty of them, but that he is inwardly conscious, that the reproach may be so easily return'd and thrown back upon himself. However, this is a natural Acknowledgment of the Deformity and Shamefulness of Sin and Vice.

2. They are likewise shameful, because they are so great a Dishonour to our Nature, and to the Dignity and Excellency of our Being. We go below our selves, and act beneath the Dignity of our Nature, when we do any thing contrary to the Rules and Laws of it, or to the revealed Will of God; because these are the Bounds and Limits which God and Nature hath set to human Actions; and are the Measures of our Duty, *i. e.* what is fit and becoming for us to do, and what not. So that all Sin and Vice is base and unworthy, and beneath the Dignity of our Nature; it argues a corrupt and diseased Constitution and Habit of Mind, a crooked and perverse Disposition of Will, and a sordid and mean temper of Spirit.

And therefore the Scripture doth frequently represent a State of Sin and Wickedness, by that which is accounted the basest and meanest Condition among Men, by a State of Servitude and Slavery, especially if it had been our Choice, or the evident and necessary Consequence of our wilful Fault: For we do as bad as choose it, when we wilfully bring it upon our selves. So that to be a Sinner, is to be a Slave to some vile Lust, Appetite, or Passion, to some unnatural or irregular Desire; it is to sell ourselves into Bondage, and to part with one of the most valuable Things in the World, our Liberty, upon low and unworthy Terms. Such a State and Condition does unavoidably debase and debauch our Minds, and break the Force and Firmness of our Spirits, and robs us, as *Dalilah* did *Sampson*, of our Strength and Courage, of our Resolution and Constancy; so that Men have not the Heart left to design and endeavour in good earnest their own Rescue out of this mean and miserable Estate, into which by their own Folly and Fault they have brought themselves.

When Men are engaged into a Custom of sinning, and have habituated themselves to any vicious Course, how do they betray their Weakness, and want of Resolution, by being at the beck of every foolish Lust, and by suffering themselves to be commanded and hurried away by every unruly Appetite and Passion, to do things which they know to be greatly to their Harm and Prejudice, and which they are convinced are mean and sordid things, and such as they are ashamed that any wise Man should see them doing! And there is no greater Argument of a pitiful and degenerate Spirit, than to commit such things as a Man would blush to be surprized in, and would be mightily troubled to hear of afterwards. And which is more, after he hath been convinc'd by manifold Experience, that they are a Shame and Disgrace to him, and make him to hang down his Head, and let fall his Countenance, whenever he is in better Company than himself; yet after this to go and do the same things again, which he is sensible are so shameful, and to be so impotent, and to have so little Command of himself, as not to be able to free himself from this Bondage, nor the Heart to pray to God that by his Grace he would enable him hereto.

And that Sin is of this shameful Nature, is evident, in that the greatest part of Sinners take so much Care and Pains to hide their Vices from the Sight and Notice of Men, and to this purpose choose Darkness and secret Places of Retirement to commit their Sins in. The Apostle takes Notice, that thus much Modesty was left even in a very wicked and degenerate Age, *1 Thess. v. 7. They that be drunk* (says he) *are drunk in the night.* Now all this is a plain Acknowledgment, that Sin is a spurious and degenerate thing, that it misbecomes human Nature, and is below the Dignity of a reasonable Creature: Otherwise why should Men be so solicitous and concern'd to cover their Faults from the Sight of others? If they are not ashamed of them, why do they not bring them into the broad Light, and shew them openly, if they think they will endure it?

So true is that Observation which *Plato* makes, That tho' a Man were sure that God would forgive his Sins, and that Men should never know them, yet there is that Baseness in Sin, that a wise Man, that considers what it is, would blush to himself alone to be guilty of it; and though he were not afraid of the Punishment, would be ashamed of the Turpitude and Deformity of it.

Did but a Man consider seriously with himself, how mean and unmanly it is for a Man to be drunk; and what an apish and ridiculous thing he renders himself to all sober Men that behold him, and with what Contempt and Scorn they entertain such a Sight; and how brutish it is to wallow in any unlawful Lust, and

how much a Man descends and stoops beneath himself: what shameful Fear and Cowardice he betrays when he is frightened to tell a Lye out of Fear, or tempted thereto for some little Advantage; and yet is so inconsistent with himself, as to have, or to pretend to have the Courage to fight any Man that shall tell him so saucy a Truth, as that he told a Lye.

Would but a Man think before-hand, how unworthy, and how unequal a thing it is to defraud or cheat his Brother, or to do any thing to another Man which he would be loath in the like case that he should do to him; how base a thing it is for a Man to be perfidious and false to his Promise or Trust; how monstrous to be unthankful to one that hath highly obliged him, and every way and upon all occasions deserved well at his hands; and so I might instance in all other sorts of Sins; I say, he that considers this well and wisely, tho' there were no Law against Sin, and (if it were a possible case, and fit to be supposed) tho' there were no such Being as God in the World, to call him to account and punish him for it, yet out of mere Generosity and Greatness of Mind, out of pure respect to himself, and the Dignity and Rank of his Being, and of his Order in the World, out of very Reverence to human Nature, and the inward Persuasion of his own Mind (however he came by that Persuasion) concerning the Indecency and Deformity and Shamefulness of the Thing; I say, for these Reasons, if there were no other, a Man would strive with himself, with all his Might, to refrain from Sin and Vice, and not only blush, but abhor to think of doing a wicked Action.

3. Sin will yet farther appear shameful, in that it is so great a Reproach to our Understandings and Reasons, and so foul a Blot upon our Prudence and Discretion. *Omnis peccans aut ignorans est, aut incogitans*, is a Saying, I think, of one of the School-men; (as one would guess by the *Latin* of it) *Every Sinner is either an ignorant or an inconsiderate Person*. Either Men do not understand what they do, when they commit Sin; or if they do know, they do not actually attend to, and consider what they know. Either they are habitually or actually ignorant of what they do; for Sin and Consideration cannot dwell together; 'tis so very unreasonable and absurd a Thing, that it requires either gross Ignorance, or stupid Inadvertency, to make a Man capable of committing it. Whenever a Man sins, he must either be destitute of Reason, or must lay it aside or asleep for the Time, and so suffer himself to be hurried away, and to act *brutishly*, as if *he had no understanding*.

Did but Men attentively consider what it is to offend God, and to break the Laws of that great Law-giver, who *is able to save or to destroy*, they would discern so many invincible Objections against the Thing, and would be filled with such strong Fears and Jealousies of the fatal Issue and Event of it, that they would not dare to venture upon it. And therefore we find the Scripture so frequently resolving the Wickedness of Men into their Ignorance and Inconsiderateness, *Psal. xiv. 4. Have all the Workers of Iniquity no Knowledge?* Intimating that by their Actions one would judge so. And the same Account God himself also gives elsewhere of the frequent Disobedience and Rebellion of the People of *Israel*, *Deut. xxxii. 28, 29. They are a nation void of Council, neither is there any understanding in them. Oh! that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!* Knowledge and Consideration would cure a great part of the Wickedness that is in the World; Men would not commit Sin with so much greediness, would they but take time to consider and bethink themselves what they do.

Have we not Reason then to be ashamed of Sin, which casts such a Reproach of Ignorance and Rashness upon us? and of Imprudence likewise and Indiscretion? since nothing can be more directly and plainly against our greatest and best Interest both of Body and Soul, both here and hereafter, both now and to all Eternity. And there is nothing that Men are more ashamed of, than to be guilty of so great an Imprudence, as to act clearly against their own Interest, to which Sin is the most plainly cross and contrary that it is possible for any thing to be. No Man can engage and continue in a sinful Course, without being so far abused and infatuated, as to be contented to part with everlasting Happiness, and to be undone and miserable for ever; none but he that can persuade himself against all the

Reason and Sense of Mankind, that there is Pleasure enough in the transient Acts of Sin to make amends for Eternal Sorrow, and Shame, and Suffering. And can such a Thought as this enter into the Heart of a considerate Man? *Epicurus* was so wise, as to conclude against all Pleasures that would give a Man more Trouble and Disturbance afterwards; against all Pleasures that had Pain and Grief consequent upon them; and he forbids his Wise Man to taste of them, or to meddle with them; and had he believed any thing of a future State, he must, according to his Principle, have pronounc'd it the greatest Folly that could be, for any Man to purchase the Pleasures and Happiness of a few Years, at the dear rate of Eternal Misery and Torment. So that if be a Disgrace to a Man to act imprudently, and to do things plainly against his Interest, then Vice is the greatest Reproach that is possible.

The 4th and last Consideration, which renders Sin so shameful to us, is that it is our own voluntary Act and Choice. We choose this Disgrace, and willingly bring this Reproach upon our selves. We pity an Idiot, and one that is naturally destitute of Understanding, or one that loseth the use of his Reason by a Disease or other inevitable Accident: But every one despiseth him who besots himself, and plays the fool out of carelessness and a gross neglect of himself. And this is the Case of the Sinner; there is no Man that sinneth, but because he is wanting to himself; he might be wiser and do better, and will not; but he chooses his own Devices, and voluntarily runs himself upon those Inconveniencies which it was in his Power to have avoided.

Not but that I do heartily own and lament the great Corruption and Degeneracy of our Nature, and the strong Propensions which appear so early in us to that which is evil: but God hath provided a Remedy and Cure for all this: For since *the Grace of God which brings Salvation unto all Men hath appeared*, under the Influence and through the Assistance of that Grace which is offer'd to them by the Gospel, Men may *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*. For I make no doubt, but since God has enter'd into a new Covenant of Grace with Mankind, and offered new Terms of Life and Salvation to us; I say, I doubt not, but his Grace is ready at hand, to enable us to perform all those Conditions which he requires of us, if we be not wanting to our selves.

There was a way of Salvation established, before the Gospel was clearly reveal'd to the World; and they who under that Dispensation, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, sincerely endeavour'd to do the Will of God, so far as they knew it, were not utterly destitute of Divine Grace and Assistance: But now there is a more plentiful Effusion of God's Grace and Holy Spirit: So that whoever under the Gospel sins deliberately, sins wilfully, and is wicked, not for want of Power but of Will to do otherwise. And this is that which makes Sin so shameful a thing, and so very reproachful to us, that we destroy our selves by our own folly and neglect of our selves, and become miserable by our own choice, and when the Grace of God hath put it into our Power to be wise and to be happy.

I should now have proceeded to the *Second* thing I propos'd, which was to consider Sin in relation to God, and to shew that it is no less shameful in that respect, than I have shewn it to be with regard to our selves: But this I shall refer to another opportunity.

S E R M O N CX.

The Shamefulness of Sin, an Argument for Repentance.

R O M. VI. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is Death. But now being made free from sin, and become Servants to God, ye have your fruit unto Holiness, and the end Everlasting Life.

IN these Words the Apostle makes a comparison between an Holy and Virtuous, and a Sinful and Vicious course of Life, and sets before us a perfect enumeration of the manifest Inconveniencies of the one, and the manifold Advantages of the other.

I began with the *First* of these, *viz.* to shew the manifest Inconveniencies of a sinful and vicious course. I am upon the *Second* Inconvenience of a sinful course, *viz.* That the reflection upon it afterwards is cause of great Shame and *Confusion of face* to us; and that

First, In relation to ourselves. Which I have dispatch'd, and proceed now in the

Second Place to consider Sin in respect of God, against whom, and in whose sight and presence it is committed; and upon examination it will appear to be no less shameful in this respect than the other.

There are some Persons before whom we are more apt to be ashamed and blush than before others; as those whom we reverence, those to whom we are greatly oblig'd, and those who are clear of those faults which we are guilty of; and those who hate or greatly dislike what we do; especially if they be present with us, and in our company; if they stand by us, and observe, and take notice of what we do, and are likely to publish our folly and make it known, and have Authority and Power to punish us for our faults; we are ashamed to have done any thing that is vile and unworthy before such Persons. Now to render Sin the more shameful, God may be consider'd by us under all these Notions, and in all these Respects.

I. Whenever we commit any Sin, we do it before him, in his presence, and under his Eye and Knowledge, to whom of all Persons in the World we ought to pay the most profound reverence. I remember *Seneca* somewhere says; that "There are some Persons, *quorum interventu perdit quicquē homines vitia supermerent*, that are so awful and so generally reverenc'd for the eminency of their "Virtues, that even the most profligate and impudent Sinners will endeavour "to suppress their Vices, and refrain from any thing that is notoriously bad, and "uncomely, whilst such Persons stand by them, and are in Presence." Such an one was *Cato* among the *Romans*. The People of *Rome* had such a Regard and Reverence for him, that if he appeared, they would not begin or continue their usual Sports, 'till he was withdrawn from the Theatre, thinking them too light to be acted before a Person of his Gravity and Virtue: And if they were so much aw'd by the Presence of a Wise and a Virtuous Man, that they were ashamed to do any thing that was unseemly before him; how much more should the Presence of the Holy God, who is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, make us blush to do any thing that is lewd and vile in his sight, and fill us with shame and *confusion of face* at the thoughts of it? Now whenever we commit any Sin, God looks upon us; and he alone is an ample Theatre indeed. That he observes what we do, ought to be more to us, than if the Eyes of all the World besides were gazing upon us.

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2. He likewise is incomparably our greatest Benefactor, and there is no Person in the World to whom in any degree we stand so much oblig'd, as to him; and from whom we can expect and hope for so much good, as from him; the consideration whereof must make us ashamed, so often as we consider, and are conscious to ourselves, that we have done any thing that is grievous and displeasing to him.

We are wont to have a more peculiar Reverence for those to whom we are exceedingly beholden, and to be much ashamed to do any thing before them which may signify disrespect, and much more enmity against them; because this would be horrible ingratitude, one of the most odious and shameful of all Vices. And is there any one to whom we can stand more obliged, than to him that made us, than to the Author and Founder of our Beings, and the great Patron, and Preserver of our Lives? And can there then be any before whom, and against whom we should be more ashamed to offend? When the Prodigal in the Parable would set forth the Shamefulness of his Miscarriage, he aggravates it from hence, that he had offended against, and before one to whom he had been so infinitely oblig'd: *Father, says he, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.*

3. We are ashamed likewise to be guilty of any fault or crime before those Persons who are clear of it, or of any thing of the like nature themselves. Men are not apt to be ashamed before those who are their Fellow-Criminals, and involved with them in the same guilt, because they do not stand in awe of them, nor can have any reverence for them. Those who are equally guilty, must bear with one another. We are not apt to fear the censures and reproofs of those who are as bad as our selves; but we are ashamed to do a foul and unworthy Action before those who are innocent and free from the same, or the like Sins and Vices which we are guilty of.

Now whenever we commit any Sin, it is in the presence of the Holy God, who hath no part with us in our crimes, whose Nature is removed at the farthest distance from Sin, and is as contrary to it as can be. *There is no iniquity with the Lord our God.* And therefore of all Persons in the World, we should blush to be guilty of it before him.

4. We are apt also to be ashamed to do any thing before those who dislike and detest what we do. To do a wicked Action before those who are not offended at it, or perhaps take pleasure in it, is no such matter of shame to us. Now of all others, God is the greatest hater of Sin, and the most perfect Enemy to it in the whole World, *Hab. i. 13. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity, i. e. with patience, and without an infinite hatred and abhorrence of it.* Such is the unspotted Purity and Perfection of the Divine Nature, that it is not possible that God should give the least Countenance to any thing that is evil. *Psal. v. 4, 5. Thou art not a God says David there to him, that hast pleasure in iniquity, neither shall evil dwell with thee: The wicked shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*

5. We are ashamed likewise to do any thing that is evil and unseemly before those who we are afraid will publish our Faults to others, and will make known and expose the folly of them. Now whenever we sin, it is before him who will most certainly one day bring all our works of darkness into the open light, and expose all our secret deeds of dishonesty upon the publick Stage of the World, and make all the vilest of our actions known, and lay them open, with all the shameful Circumstances of them, before Men and Angels, to our everlasting Shame and Confusion. This is the meaning of that proverbial Speech, so often used by our Saviour, *There is nothing cover'd that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be made manifest.* All the Sins which we now commit with so much caution, in secret and dark retirements, shall in that great day of Revelation, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, be set in open view, and in so full and strong a light, that all the World shall see them, and that which was plotted and contrived in so much secrecy, and hardly whisper'd in this World, shall then be proclaimed aloud, and as it were upon the House-tops.

6. And Lastly, We are ashamed and afraid to commit a fault before those who we believe will call us to an account for it, and punish us severely. A Man may suffer innocently, and for a good Cause; but all suffering in that case, is by wise and good Men esteemed honourable and glorious, and tho' we are condemned by Men,

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we are acquitted in our own Consciences: But that which is properly called Punishment is always attended with Infamy and Reproach; because it always supposeth some fault and crime, as the ground and reason of it. Hence it is that in this World Men are not only afraid, but ashamed to commit any fault before those who they think have Authority and Power to punish it. He is an impudent Villain indeed, that will venture to cut a Purse in the presence of the Judge.

Now whenever we commit any Wickedness, we do it under the Eye of the great Judge of the World, who stedfastly beholds us, and whose Omnipotent Justice stands by us ready armed and charged for our Destruction, and can in a moment cut us off. Every Sin that we are guilty of, in thought, word or deed, is all in the presence of the Holy, and Just, and Powerful God; whose Power enables him, and whose Holiness and Justice will effectually engage him, one time or other, if a timely Repentance doth not prevent it, to inflict a terrible Punishment upon all the Workers of iniquity.

You see then by all that hath been said upon this Argument, how shameful a thing Sin is, and what *Confusion of face* the reflection upon our wicked Lives ought to cause in all of us. *What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?* If ever we are brought to a true Repentance for our Sins, it cannot but be matter of great shame to us.

We find in Scripture that Shame doth continually accompany Repentance, and is inseparable from it. This is one Mark and Character of a true Penitent, that he is ashamed of what he hath done. Thus *Ezra*, when he makes Confession of the Sins of the People, he testifies and declares his Shame for what they had done; *I said, O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up mine Eyes to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our Heads, and our trespasses are grown up to the Heavens*, *Ezra ix. 6.* And may not we of this Nation at this day take these words unto our selves, considering to what a strange height our Sins are grown, and how iniquity abounds among us? So likewise the Prophet *Jeremiah*, when he would express the Repentance of the People of *Israel*, *Jer. iii. 25* *We lie down* (says he) *in our shame, and our Confusion covereth us, because we have sinned against the Lord our God.* In like manner the Prophet *Daniel*, after he had in the Name of the People made an humble Acknowledgment of their manifold and great Sins, he takes shame to himself and them, for them. *Dan. ix. 5.* *We have sinned*, says he, *and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled in departing from thy Precepts, and from thy Judgments. O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee; but unto us Confusion of face, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass which they have trespassed against thee: O Lord! to us belongeth confusion of face, to our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee.* By which we may judge how considerable and essential a part of Repentance this Holy Man esteem'd Shame for the Sins they had been guilty of, to be. And indeed upon all occasions of solemn Repentance, and Humiliation for Sin, this taking shame for their Sins is hardly ever omitted, as if there could be no sincere Confession of Sin and Repentance for it, without testifying their *Shame* and *Confusion of face* upon the remembrance of their Sins.

Now to stir up this affection of Shame in us, let me offer to you these three Considerations.

I. Consider what great reason we have to be heartily ashamed of all the Sins and Offences which we have been guilty of against God. It was a good old Precept of Philosophy, *that we should reverence our selves, i. e.* that we should never do any thing that should be matter of Shame and Reproach to us afterwards, nothing that misbecomes us, and is unworthy of us.

I have shewn at large, that all Sin and Vice is a dishonour to our Nature, and beneath the Dignity of it; that it is a great Reproach to our Reason, and directly contrary to our true and best interest; that it hath all the aggravating circumstances of Infamy and Shame; that every Sin that was at any time committed by us, was done in the presence of one, whom of all persons in the World we have most reason to reverence, and against him, to whom of all others we stand most obliged for the greatest Favours, for innumerable Benefits, for infinite Mercy, and Patience,

and

and Forbearance towards us, in the Presence of the Holy and Just God, who is at the farthest distance from Sin, and the greatest and most implacable Enemy to it in the whole World; and who will one day punish all our faults, and expose us to open shame for them; who will *bring every Work into Judgment, and every secret Sin* that ever we committed, and take Vengeance upon us for all our iniquities. So that whenever we sin, we shamefully intreat our selves, and give the deepest wounds to our Reputation in the esteem of him, who is the most competent Judge of what is truly Honourable and Praise-worthy, and cloath our selves with shame and dishonour.

We are ashamed of Poverty, because the poor Man is despised, and almost ridiculous in the Eye of the proud and covetous rich Man, *whose riches are his high Tower*, and make him apt to look down upon the poor Man that is below him, with contempt and scorn; we are ashamed of a dangerous and contagious Disease, because all Men fly infectious Company; but a Man may be poor or sick by misfortune; but no Man is wicked, but by his own fault and wilful choice. Ill natur'd and inconsiderate Men will be apt to contemn us for our poverty and affliction in any kind, but by our Vices we render our selves odious to God, and to all good and considerate Men.

II. Consider that Shame for Sin now, is the way to prevent eternal Shame and Confusion hereafter. For this is one great part of the Misery of another World, that the Sinner shall then *be filled with everlasting shame and confusion* at the remembrance of his faults and folly. The eternal Misery of wicked Men is sometimes in Scripture represented, as if it consisted only or chiefly in the Infamy and Reproach which will then overwhelm them, when all their Crimes and Faults shall be exposed and laid open to the view of the whole World, *Dan. xii. 2. where the general Resurrection of the just and unjust is thus describ'd; Many of them that sleep in the dust of the Earth shall awake, some to everlasting Life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt: Where everlasting Life and everlasting Shame are opposed, as if eternal Shame were a kind of perpetual Death.*

In this World Sinners make a hard shift, by concealing or extenuating their faults, as well as they can, to suppress or lessen their shame; they have not now so clear and full a Conviction of the evil and folly of their Sin; God is pleased to bear with them, and to spare them at present, and they do not yet feel the dismal Effects and Consequences of a wicked Life: but in the next World, when *the righteous judgment of God is revealed*, and the full Vials of his Wrath shall be poured forth upon Sinners, they shall then *be clothed with shame as with a garment, and be covered with confusion*; then they will feel the folly of their Sins, and have a sensible Demonstration within themselves of the infinite Evil of them; their own Consciences will then furiously fly in their Faces, and with the greatest bitterness and rage upbraid and reproach them with the folly of their own doings; and so long as we are sensible that we suffer for our own folly, so long we must unavoidably be ashamed of what we have done. So that if Sinners shall be everlastingly tormented in another World, it necessarily follows, that they shall be eternally confounded.

Is it not then better to remember our ways now, and to be ashamed and repent of them, than to bring everlasting Shame and Confusion upon our selves, before God, and Angels, and Men? This is the Argument which St. John useth, to take Men off from Sin, and to engage them to Holiness and Righteousness of Life; *1 John ii. 28. That when he shall appear, that is, when he shall come to judge the World, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

III. And lastly, Consider that nothing sets Men at a farther distance from Repentance, and all hopes of their becoming better, and brings them nearer to Ruin, than Impudence in a sinful Course. There are too many in the World who are so far from being ashamed of their Wickedness, and blushing at the mention of their faults, that they boast of them, and glory in them. God often complains of this in the People of *Israel*, as a sad presage of their Ruin, and an ill Sign of their desperate and irrecoverable Condition; *Jer. iii. 3. Thou hadst a whore's forehead, and refusedst to be ashamed*; and *Jer. vi. 15. Were they ashamed, when they committed abominations? Nay, they were not ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall, and in the time that I visit them*

they shall be cast down. Hear likewise how the Apostle doth lament the Case of such Persons, as incurable and past all Remedy: *Philip. iii. 18, 19. There are many of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are Enemies to the Cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame. Such Persons who glory in that which ought to be their shame, what can their end be but destruction?*

There is certainly no greater Argument of a degenerate Person, and of one that is utterly lost to all Sense of Goodness, than to be void of Shame: and as on the one hand, they must be very towardsly, and well dispos'd to Virtue, who are drawn by Ingenuity, and meer Sense of Obligation and Kindness: so on the other hand, they must be very stupid and insensible, who are not wrought upon by Arguments of Fear and Sense of Shame. There is hardly any hopes of that Man who is not to be reclaimed from an evil Course, neither by the Apprehension of danger, nor of disgrace, and who can at once securely neglect both his Safety and Reputation.

Hear how the Prophet represents the deplorable Case of such Persons, *Isa. iii. 9. The shew of their Countenance bears witness against them; in the Hebrew it is, The hardness of their Countenance doth testify against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Wo unto their Souls, for they have rewarded evil to themselves.* When Men are once arrived to that pitch of Impiety, as to harden their Foreheads against all Sense and Shew of Shame, and so as to be able to set a good Face upon the foulest Matter in the World; *wo unto them*, because their Case seems then to be desperate, and past all hopes of Recovery. For who can hope that a Man will forsake his Sins, when he is not so much as ashamed of them? But yet one would think, that those that are not ashamed of their Impiety, should be ashamed of their Impudence, and should at least blush at this, that they can do the vilest and the most shameful things in the World without blushing.

To conclude this whole Discourse, let the Consideration of the Evil and Shamefulness of Sin have this double Effect upon us, to make us heartily ashamed of the past Errors and Miscarriages of our Lives, and firmly resolved to do better for the future.

I. To be heartily ashamed of the past Errors of our Lives. So often as we reflect upon the manifold and heinous Provocations of the Divine Majesty, which many of us have been guilty of in the long Course of a wicked Life, together with the heavy Aggravations of our Sins, by all the Circumstances that can render them abominable and shameful, not only in the Eye of God and Men, but of our own Consciences likewise; we have great reason to humble our selves before God, in a penitent Acknowledgment of them, and every one of us to say with *Job, Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth, I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes*; and with *Exra, O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my Face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our Trespas is grown up unto the heavens: And now, O my God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments*; and with holy *Daniel, We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly; O Lord! Righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face.* Thus we should reproach and upbraid our selves in the Presence of that Holy God, whom we have so often and so highly offended, and against whom we have done as evil things as we could, and say with the prodigal Son in the Parable; *Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.*

If we would thus take Shame to our selves, and humble our selves before God, he would be merciful to us miserable Sinners; he would take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; and so soon as ever he saw us coming towards him, would meet us with joy, and embrace us in the Arms of his Mercy. And then,

II. As we should be heartily ashamed of the past Errors and Miscarriages of our Lives, so we should firmly resolve, by God's Grace, to do better for the future; never to consent to Iniquity, or to do any thing which we are convinc'd is contrary to our Duty, and which will be matter of Shame to us, when we come to look back upon it, and make our Blood to rise in our Faces at the Mention or Intimation of it; which will make us to sneak, and hang down our heads, when we are twitted

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ted and upbraided with it, and which, if it be not prevented by a timely Humiliation and Repentance, will fill us with Horror and Amazement, with Shame and Confusion of Face, both at the Hour of Death, and in the Day of Judgment.

So that when we look into our Lives, and examine the Actions of them, when we consider what we have done, and what our Doings have deserved, we should, in a due sense of the great and manifold Miscarriages of our Lives, and from a deep Sorrow and Shame and Detestation of our selves for them; I say, we should, with that true Penitent described in *Job*, take Words to our selves, and say, *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more; That which I know not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* And thus I have done with the *second* Inconvenience of a sinful and vicious Course of Life, viz. that the reflection upon it afterwards causeth Shame; *What fruit had you then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?*

S E R M O N CXI.

The final Issue of Sin, an Argument for Repentance.

R O M. VI. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is Death. But now being made free from sin, and become Servants to God, ye have your fruit unto Holiness, and the end Everlasting Life.

*The third
Sermon on
this Text.*

THESE words are a Comparison between an Holy and Virtuous and a Sinful and Vicious Course of Life, and set before us the manifest Inconveniencies of the one, and the manifold Advantages of the other. I have enter'd into a Discourse upon the *First* of these Heads, viz. The manifest Inconveniencies of a sinful and vicious Course: And the Text mentions these *three*.

I. That it is Unprofitable.

II. That the reflection upon it afterwards is matter of Shame. These *Two* I have spoken largely to. I shall now proceed to the

III. And *last* Inconvenience, which the Text mentions, of a sinful and vicious Course of Life, viz. That the final Issue and Consequence of these things is very dismal and miserable; *The end of those things is Death.* No Fruit then when ye did these things; shame now that you come to reflect upon them; and Misery and Death at the last.

There are indeed almost innumerable Considerations and Arguments to discourage and deter Men from Sin; the Unreasonableness of it in it self; the Injustice and Disloyalty, and Ingratitude of it in respect to God; the ill Example of it to others; the Cruelty of it to our selves; the Shame and Dishonour that attends it; the Grief and Sorrow which it will cost us, if ever we be brought to a due Sense of it; the Trouble and Horror of a guilty Conscience, that will perpetually haunt us, but above all the miserable Event and sad Issue of a wicked Course of Life continued in, and finally unrepented of. The Temptations to Sin may be alluring enough, and look upon us with a smiling Countenance, and the Commission may afford us a short and imperfect Pleasure, but the Remembrance of it will certainly be bitter, and the End of it miserable.

And this Consideration is of all others the most apt to work upon the generality of Men, especially upon the more obstinate and obdurate sort of Sinners, and those whom no other Arguments will penetrate; that whatever the present Pleasure and Advantage of Sin may be, it will be Bitterness and Misery in the end.

The two former Inconveniencies of a sinful Course which I lately discoursed of, *viz.* That Sin is unprofitable, and that it is shameful, are very considerable, and ought to be great Arguments against it to every Sinner, and considerate Man: and yet how light are they, and but as the very small dust upon the balance in comparison of that insupportable weight of Misery which will oppress the Sinner at last! *Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth evil.* This, this is the Sting of all, that *the end of these things is Death.*

It is very usual in Scripture to express the greatest Happiness and the greatest Misery by Life and Death; Life being the first and most desirable of all other Blessings, because it is the Foundation of them, and that which makes us capable of all the rest. Hence we find in Scripture, that all the Blessings of the Gospel are summ'd up in this one Word, *John xx. 31. These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life thro' his Name.* 1 *John iv. 9. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live thro' him.* So that under this Term or Notion of Life, the Scripture is wont to express all Happiness to us, and more especially that Eternal Life which is the great Promise of the Gospel. And this is Life by way of Eminency; as if this frail and mortal and miserable Life which we live here in this World, did not deserve that Name.

And on the other hand, all the Evils which are consequent upon Sin, especially the dreadful and lasting Misery of another World, are called by the Name of Death, *The end of these things is Death.* So the Apostle, here in the Text, and *V. 23. The wages of sin is Death*, not only a Temporal Death, but such a Death as is opposed to eternal Life; *The Wages of sin is Death: but the gift of God is eternal Life thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.* So that *Death* here in the Text is plainly intended to comprehend in it all those fearful and astonishing Miseries wherewith the wrath of God will pursue and afflict Sinners in another World.

But what and how great this Misery is, I am not able to declare to you; *it bath no more entered into the Heart of Man*, than those great and glorious things which *God bath laid up for them that love him*: and as I would fain hope, that none of us here shall ever have the sad Experience of it; so none but those who have felt it, are able to give a tolerable description of the intolerableness of it.

But by what the Scripture hath said of it in general, and in such Metaphors as are most level to our present Capacity, it appears so full of Terror, that I am loath to attempt the Representation of it. There are so many other Arguments that are more Humane and Natural, and more proper to work upon the Reason and Ingenuity of Men; as the great Love and Kindness of God to us; the grievous Sufferings of his Son for us; the Unreasonableness and Shamefulness of Sin; the present Benefit and Advantage, the Peace and Pleasure of an Holy and Virtuous Life; and the mighty Rewards promised to it in another World, that one would think these should be abundantly sufficient to prevail with Men to gain them to goodness, and that they need not be frighted into it, and to have the Law laid to them, as it was once given to the People of *Israel in Thunder and Lightning, in Blackness, in Darkness and Tempest*, so as to make them *exceedingly to fear and tremble.* And it seems a very hard Case, that when we have to deal with Men sensible enough of their Interest in other Cases, and diligent enough to mind it, we cannot persuade them to accept of Happiness without setting before them the Terrors of Eternal Darkness, and those amazing and endless Miseries which will certainly be the Portion of those who refuse so great an Happiness: This, I say, seems very hard, that Men must be carried to the Gate of Hell before they can be brought to set their faces towards Heaven, and to think in good earnest of getting thither.

And yet it cannot be dissembled, that the Nature of Men is so degenerate as to stand in need of this Argument; and that Men are so far engaged in an evil Course, that they are not to be reclaim'd from it by any other Consideration but of the endless and unspeakable Misery of impenitent Sinners in another World. And therefore God, knowing how necessary this is, doth frequently make use of it; and our Blessed Saviour, than whom none was ever more mild and gentle,
doth

doth often set this Consideration before Men to take them off from Sin, and to bring them to do better. And this St. Paul tells us, *Rom. i. 18.* is one principal thing which renders the Gospel so powerful an Instrument for the reforming and saving of Mankind, because *therein the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men.*

So that how harsh and unpleasant soever this Argument may be, the great stupidity and folly of some Men, and their inveterate obstinacy in an evil course makes it necessary for us to press it home, that those who will not be moved, and made sensible of the Danger and Inconvenience of Sin by gentler Arguments, may be rous'd and awaken'd by the Terrors of Eternal Misery.

That the last Issue and Consequence of a wicked Life will be very miserable, the general Apprehension of Mankind concerning the fate of bad Men in another World, and the secret misgivings of Mens Consciences, give Men too much ground to fear. Besides that the Justice of Divine Providence, which is not many times in this World so clear and manifest, does seem to require that there should be a time of Recompence, when the Virtue and Patience of good Men should be rewarded, and the Insolence and Obstinacy of bad Men should be punish'd. This cannot but appear very reasonable to any Man that considers the Nature of God, and is persuaded that he governs the World, and hath given Laws to Mankind, by the observance whereof they may be happy, and by the neglect and contempt whereof they must be miserable.

But that there might remain no doubts upon the minds of Men concerning these Matters, God hath been pleas'd to reveal this from Heaven by a Person sent by him on purpose to declare it to the World; and to the Truth of these Doctrines concerning a future State, and a Day of Judgment, and Recompences, God hath given Testimony by unquestionable Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of them, and particularly by *the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, whereby he hath given an assurance unto all Men, that he is the Person ordained by God to judge the World in righteousness, and to render to every Man according to his Deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour and immortality, eternal Life; but to them who obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of Man that doeth evil.*

So that how quietly soever wicked Men may pass through this World, or out of it (which they seldom do) Misery will certainly overtake their Sins at last; unspeakable and intolerable Misery, arising from the anguish of a guilty Conscience, from a lively Apprehension of their sad Loss, and from a quick sense of the sharp Pain which they labour under; and all this aggravated and set off with the Consideration of past Pleasure, and the despair of future Ease. Each of these is Misery enough, and all of them together do constitute and make up that dismal and forlorn State which the Scripture calls Hell and Damnation.

I shall therefore briefly represent (for it is by no means desirable to dwell long upon so melancholy and frightful an Argument)

First, The principal Ingredients which constitute this miserable State. And,

Secondly, The Aggravations of it.

First, The principal Ingredients which constitute this miserable State; and they are these *three* which I have mention'd.

I. The Anguish of a guilty Mind.

II. The lively Apprehensions of the invaluable Happiness which they have lost.

III. A quick Sense of the intolerable Pains which they lie under.

I. The Anguish of a guilty Conscience. And this is natural; for there is a Worm that abides in a guilty Conscience, and is continually gnawing it. This is that our Saviour calls *the Worm that dies not.* And though God should inflict no positive Punishment upon Sinners, yet this is a Revenge which every Man's mind would take upon him; for things are so ordered by God in the original Frame and Constitution of our Minds, that on the one hand Peace and Pleasure, Contentment and Satisfaction do naturally arise in our Minds from the conscience of Well-doing, and spring up in the Soul of every good Man: And on the other hand, no Man knowingly does an evil Action, but his guilty Conscience galls him for it, and the remembrance of it is full of bitterness to him.

And

And this the Sinner feels in this World; he disguiseth and dissembleth his Trouble as much as he can, and shifts off these uneasy Thoughts by all the Diversions he can devise, and by this means palliates his Disease, and renders his Condition in some sort tolerable unto himself: but when he is alone, or cast upon the Bed of Sicknes, and his Thoughts are let loose upon him, and he hath nothing to give them a Diversion, how does his guilt ferment and work! And the Fever, which lurk'd before, does now shew it self, and is ready to burn him up; so that nothing can appear more dismal and ghastly, than such a Man does to himself.

And much more, when Sinners come into the other World, and are enter'd into the Regions of Darknes, and the melancholy Shades where evil Spirits are continually wandring up and down, where they can meet with nothing either of Employment or Pleasure, to give the least Diversion to their pensive Minds; where they shall find nothing to do, but to reflect upon and bemoan themselves; where all the wicked Actions that ever they committed shall come fresh into their Minds, and stare their Consciences in the face. It is not to be imagined what sad Scenes will then be present to their Imaginations, and what sharp Reflections their own guilty Minds will make upon them, and what Swarms of Furies will possess them.

So soon as ever they are entred upon that State, they will then find themselves forsaken of all those Comforts which they once placed so much Happiness in; and they will have nothing to converse with but their own uneasy selves, and those that are as miserable as themselves, and therefore incapable of administering any Comfort to one another. They will then have nothing to think on but what will trouble them; and every new Thought will be a new increase of their Trouble. Their Guilt will make them restless, and the more restless they are, the more will their Minds be enraged; and there will be no end of their Vexation, because the Cause and Ground of it is perpetual. For there is no possible way to get rid of Guilt but by Repentance; and there is no Encouragement, no Argument to Repentance, where there is no hope of Pardon. So that if God should hold his Hand, and leave Sinners to themselves, and to the Lashes of their own Conscience, a more severe and terrible Torment can hardly be imagined, than that which a guilty Mind would execute upon it self.

II. Another Ingredient into the Miseries of Sinners in another World, is the lively Apprehension of the invaluable Happiness which they have lost by their own Obstinacy and foolish Choice. In the next World wicked Men shall be for ever separated from God, who is the Fountain of Happiness, and from all the Comforts of his Presence and Favour. This, our Saviour tells us, is the first part of that dreadful Sentence that shall be passed upon the wicked at the great Day; *Depart from me*; which Words, tho' they do not signify any positive Infliction and Torment, yet they import the greatest Loss that can be imagined. And it is not so easy to determine which is the greatest of Evils, Loss or Pain. Indeed to a Creature that is only endowed with Sense, there can be no Misery but that of Pain and Suffering: but to those who have Reason and Understanding, and are capable of knowing the value of Things, and of reflecting upon themselves in the want of them, the greatest loss may be as grievous and hard to be born as the greatest Pain.

'Tis true, that Sinners are now so immers'd in the gross and sensual delights of this World, that they have no apprehension of the Joys of Heaven, and the Pleasures of God's Presence, and of the Happiness that is to be enjoyed in Communion with him, and therefore they are not now capable of estimating the greatness of this Loss. But this insensibleness of wicked Men continues no longer than this present State, which affords them variety of Objects of Pleasure and of Business to divert them and entertain them: But when they come into the other World, they shall then have nothing else to think upon, but the sad Condition into which they have brought themselves, nothing to do but to pore and meditate upon their own Misfortune, when they shall lift up their Eyes, and with *the rich Man* in the Parable, in the midst of their *Torments*, look up to those who are in *Abraham's bosom*; and their Misery will be mightily increased by the Contemplation of that Happiness which others enjoy, and themselves have so foolishly forfeited and fallen short of; insomuch that it would be happy for them, if that God, from whose presence they are banish'd, that Heaven from which they have excluded

excluded themselves, and that everlasting Glory which they have despised and neglected, might be for ever hid from their Eyes, and never come into their Minds.

III. This is not all, but besides the sad Apprehension of their Loss, they shall endure the sharpest Pains. These God hath threatned Sinners withal, and they are in Scripture represented to us, by the most grievous and intolerable Pains that in this World we are acquainted withal, as by the Pain of Burning. Hence the wicked are said to be cast into the Lake which burns with Fire and Brimstone, and into the Fire which is not quenched; which, whether it be literally to be understood or not, is certainly intended to signify the most severe kind of Torment; but what that is, and in what manner it shall be inflicted, none know but they that feel it, and lie under it. The Scripture tells so much in general of it, as is enough to warn Men to avoid it; that it is the effect of a mighty Displeasure, and of Anger armed with Omnipotence, and consequently must needs be very terrible, more dreadful than we can now conceive, and probably greater than can be described by any of those Pains and Sufferings which now we are acquainted withal; for *who knows the power of God's anger*, and the utmost of what Almighty Justice can do to Sinners? Who can comprehend the vast significancy of those Expressions, *Fear him, who after he hath killed can destroy both body and soul in Hell?* And again, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?* One would think this were Misery enough, and needed no farther Aggravation; and yet it hath Two terrible ones, from the Consideration of past pleasures which Sinners have enjoyed in this World, and from an utter Despair of future Ease and Remedy.

1. From the Consideration of the past Pleasures which Sinners have enjoyed in this Life. This will make their Sufferings much more sharp and sensible; for as nothing commends Pleasure more, and gives Happiness a quicker taste and relish, than precedent Sufferings and Pain, there is not perhaps a greater Pleasure in the World, than the strange and sudden Ease which a Man finds after a sharp Fit of the Stone or Cholick, or after a Man is taken off the Rack, and Nature which was in an Agony before is all at once set at perfect Ease: So on the other Hand, nothing exasperates Suffering more, and sets a keener Edge upon Misery, than to step into Afflictions and Pain immediately out of a state of great Ease and Pleasure. This we find in the Parable was the great Aggravation of the rich Man's Torment, that he had first *received good things*, and was afterwards *tormented*. We may do well to consider this, that those Pleasures of Sin which have now so much of Temptation in them, will in the next world be one of the chief Aggravations of our Torment.

2. The greatest Aggravation of this Misery will be, that it is attended with the Despair of any future Ease; and when Misery and Despair meet together, they make a Man compleatly miserable. The duration of this Misery is express'd to us in Scripture, by such words as are us'd to signify the longest and most interminable duration. *Depart ye cursed into everlasting Fire*, Matt. xxv. 41. *Where the worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched*, Mark ix. 44. And 2 Thess. i. 7. it is there said, that those *who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son, shall be punish'd with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his Power*. And in Rev. xx. 10. *That the wicked shall be tormented Day and Night for ever and ever*. And what can be imagined beyond this? This is the perfection of Misery, to lie under the greatest Torment, and yet be in despair of ever finding the least Ease.

And thus I have done with the *First* thing I propounded to speak to from this Text, viz. The manifest Inconveniencies of a sinful and vicious Course of Life; that it brings no present Benefit or Advantage to us; that the reflection upon it causeth Shame; and that it is fearful and miserable in the last Issue and Consequence of it. *What fruit had you, &c.*

I should now have proceeded to the *Second* Part of the Text, which represents to us the manifold Advantages of an Holy and Virtuous Course of Life; V. 22. *But now being made free from Sin and become the Servants of righteousness, ye have your fruit unto holiness; there's the present Advantage of it; and the end everlasting Life; there's the future Reward of it*. But this is a large Argument, which will require a Discourse by it self, and therefore I shall not now enter upon it; but shall

shall only make some reflections upon what hath been said, concerning the miserable Issue and Consequence of a wicked Life impenitently persisted in.

And surely if we firmly believe and seriously consider these things, we have no reason to be fond of any Vice; we can take no great Comfort or Contentment in a sinful Course. If we could for the seeming Advantage and short Pleasure of some Sins, dispense with the Temporal Mischiefs and Inconveniencies of them, which yet I cannot see how any Prudent and Considerate Man could do: if we could conquer Shame, and bear the Infamy and Reproach which attends most Sins, and could digest the upbraidings of our own Consciences, so often as we call them to remembrance, and reflect seriously upon them; tho' for the gratifying an importunate Inclination, and an impetuous Appetite, all the Inconveniencies of them might be born withal; yet methinks the very thought of the End and Issue of a wicked Life, that *the end of these things is Death, that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*, far greater than we can now describe, or imagine, *shall be to every Soul of Man that doth evil*, should over-rule us. Tho' the violence of an irregular lust and desire are able to bear down all other Arguments, yet methinks the Eternal Interest of our precious and immortal Souls should still lie near our Hearts, and affect us very sensibly. Methinks the Consideration of another World, and of all Eternity, and of that dismal fate which attends Impenitent Sinners after this Life, and the dreadful hazard of being miserable for ever, should be more than enough to dishearten any Man from a wicked Life, and to bring him to a better Mind and Course.

And if the plain Representations of these things do not prevail with Men to this purpose, it is a sign that either they do not believe these things, or else that they do not consider them; one of these two must be the reason why any Man, notwithstanding these terrible threatnings of God's Word, does venture to continue in an evil Course.

'Tis vehemently to be suspected, that Men do not really believe these things, that they are not fully persuaded that there is another state after this Life, in which the righteous God *will render to every Man according to his deeds*: and therefore so much Wickedness as we see in the lives of Men, so much Infidelity may reasonably be suspected to lie lurking in their Hearts. They may indeed seemingly profess to believe these things; but he that would know what a Man inwardly and firmly believes should attend rather to his Actions than to his Verbal Professions: For if any Man lives so, as no Man that believes the Principles of the Christian Religion in reason can live, there is too much reason to question whether that Man doth believe his Religion; he may say he does, but there is a far greater evidence in the Case than Words; the Actions of the Man are by far the most credible Declarations of the inward Sense, and Persuasion of his Mind.

Did Men firmly and heartily believe that there is a God that governs the World, and regards the Actions of Men, and that *he hath appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in righteousness*, and that all Mankind shall appear before him in that day, and every Action that they have done in their whole lives shall be brought upon the Stage, and pass a strict Examination and Censure, and that those who have made Conscience of their Duty to God and Men, and have *lived soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*, shall be unspeakably and eternally happy in the next; but those who have lived lewd and licentious Lives, and persisted in an impenitent Course, shall be extremely and everlastingly miserable, without Pity, and without Comfort, and without Remedy, and without Hope of ever being otherwise; I say, if Men were fully and firmly persuaded of these things, it is not credible, it is hardly possible that they should live such prophane and impious, such careless and dissolute Lives, as we daily see a great part of Mankind do.

That Man that can be aw'd from his Duty, or tempted to Sin by any of the Pleasures or Terrors of this World, that for the present enjoyment of his Lusts can be contented to venture his Soul, what greater Evidence than this can there be, that this Man does not believe the threatnings of the Gospel, and how *fearful a thing it is to fall into the Hands of the living God*? That Man that can be willing to undergo an hard Service for several Years, that he may be in a way to get an Estate, and be rich in this World; and yet will not be persuaded to restrain himself

himself of his Liberty, or to deny his Pleasure, or to check his Appetite or Lust, for the greatest Reward that God can promise, or the severest Punishment that he can threaten; can any Man reasonably think, that this Man is persuaded of any such Happiness or Misery after this Life, as is plainly revealed in the Gospel, that *verily there is a Reward for the Righteous, and verily there is a God that judgeth the Earth?* For what can he that believes not one syllable of the Bible do worse than this comes to?

A strong and vigorous Faith even in Temporal Cases, is a powerful Principle of Action, especially if it be back'd and enforc'd with Arguments of fear. He that believes the reality of a thing, and that it is good for him, and that it may be attained, and that if he doth attain it, it will make him very happy, and that without it he shall be extremely miserable; such a belief and persuasion will put a Man upon difficult things, and make him to put forth a vigorous endeavour, and to use a mighty industry for the obtaining of that, concerning which he is thus persuaded.

And the Faith of the Gospel ought to be so much the more powerful, by how much the Objects of hope and fear, which it presents to us, are greater and more considerable. Did Men fully believe the Happiness of Heaven, and the Torments of Hell, and were they as verily persuaded of the truth of them, as if they were before their Eyes, how insignificant would all the Terrors and Temptations of Sense be to draw them into Sin, and seduce them from their Duty?

But altho' it seems very strange, and almost incredible, that Men should believe these things, and yet live wicked and impious Lives; yet because I have no mind, and God knows there is no need to increase the number of Infidels in this Age, I shall choose rather to impute a great deal of the wickedness that is in the World to the Inconsiderateness of Men, than to their Unbelief. I will grant that they do in some sort believe these things, or at least that they do not disbelieve them; and then the great cause of Mens ruin must be, that they do not attend to the Consequence of this Belief, and how Men ought to live that are thus persuaded. Men stifle their Reason, and suffer themselves to be hurried away by Sense, into the embraces of sensual Objects and Things present, but do not consider what the end of these things will be, and what is like to become of them hereafter; for it is not to be imagin'd, but that that Man who shall calmly consider with himself what Sin is, the shortness of its Pleasure, and the Eternity of its Punishment, should seriously resolve upon a better Course of Life.

And why do we not consider these things, which are of so infinite Concernment to us? What have we our Reason for, but to reflect upon our selves, and to mind what we do, and wisely to compare things together, and upon the whole matter to judge what makes most for our true and lasting Interest? To consider our whole selves, our Souls as well as our Bodies; and our whole duration not only in this World, but in the other, not only with regard to Time, but to Eternity? To look before us to the last Issue and Event of our Actions, and to the farthest Consequence of them, and to reckon upon what will be hereafter, as well as what is present; and if we suspect or hope or fear, especially if we have good reason to believe a future state after Death, in which we shall be happy or miserable to all Eternity, according as we manage and behave our selves in this World, to resolve to make it our greatest design and concernment while we are in this World, so to live and demean our selves, that we may be of the Number of those that shall be accounted worthy to escape that Misery, and to obtain that Happiness, which will last and continue for ever.

And if Men would but apply their Minds seriously to the Consideration of these things, they could not act so imprudently as they do; they would not live so by chance and without design, taking the Pleasure that comes next, and avoiding the present Evils which press upon them, without any regard to those that are future, and at a distance, tho' they be infinitely greater and more considerable: If Men could have the Patience to debate and argue these matters with themselves, they could not live so preposterously as they do, preferring their Bodies before their Souls, and the World before God, and the things which are Temporal before the things that are Eternal.

Did Men verily and in good earnest believe but half of that to be true which hath now been declared to you, concerning the miserable state of impenitent Sin-

ners in another World (and I am very sure, that the one half of that which is true concerning that state hath not been told you) I say, did we in any measure believe what hath been so imperfectly represented, *What manner of Persons should we all be, in all holy Conversation and Godliness, waiting for and hastening unto* (that is, making haste to make the best Preparation we could for) *the coming of the Day of God!*

I will conclude all with our Saviour's Exhortation to his Disciples, and to all others; *Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man: To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.*

S E R M O N CXII.

The present and future Advantage of an Holy and Virtuous Life.

The fourth
Sermon on
this Text.

R O M. VI. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is Death. But now being made free from sin, and become Servants to God, ye have your fruit unto Holiness, and the end Everlasting Life.

I Have several times told you, that the Apostle in these words makes a Comparison between an Holy and Virtuous, and a Sinful and Vicious Course of Life, and sets before us the manifest Inconveniencies of the one, and the manifold Advantages of the other.

I have finish'd my Discourse upon the *First* Part of the Comparison; the manifest Inconveniencies of a sinful and vicious Course. I proceed now to the other Part of the Comparison, which was the

Second Thing I propounded to speak to from these words, *viz.* the manifold Benefits and Advantages of an Holy and Virtuous Course; and that upon these *Two* accounts.

First, Of the present Benefit and Advantage of it, which the Apostle here calls *Fruit, Ye have your fruit unto holiness.*

Secondly, In Respect of the future Reward of it, *and the end everlasting Life.* So that here is a considerable Earnest in hand, besides a mighty Recompence afterwards, infinitely beyond the proportion of our best Actions and Services, both in regard of the greatness and duration of it, *everlasting Life*; that is, for a few transient acts of Obedience, a perfect and immutable and endless state of Happiness. And these *Two* the Apostle mentions in opposition to the Inconveniencies and evil Consequences of a wicked and vicious Course; *What fruit had you then in those things? &c.*

But before I come to these *Two* particulars, I shall take notice of the description which the Apostle here makes of the change from a state of Sin and Vice to a state of Holiness and Virtue. *But now being made free from sin, and become the Servants of God*; intimating that the state of Sin is a state of Servitude and Slavery, from which Repentance and the change which is thereby made does set us free; *But now being made free from Sin.* And so our Saviour tells us, that *whosoever committeth Sin is the Servant of Sin*; and this is the vilest and hardest Slavery in the World, because it is the Servitude of the Soul, the best and noblest part of our selves; 'tis the subjection of our Reason, which ought to rule and bear sway over the inferior Faculties, to our sensual Appetites and brutish Passions

sions; which is as uncomely a sight, as to see Beggars ride on Horse-back, and Princes walk on Foot. And as inferior Persons, when they are advanced to Power, are strangely Insolent and Tyrannical towards those that are subject to them; so the Lusts and Passions of Men, when they once get the Command of them, are the most domineering Tyrants in the World; and there is no such Slave as a Man that is subject to his Appetite and Lust, that is under the Power of irregular Passions and vicious Inclinations, which transport and hurry him to the vilest and most unreasonable things. For a wicked Man is a Slave to as many Masters as he hath Passions and Vices; and they are very imperious and exacting; and the more he yields to them, the more they grow upon him, and exercise the greater Tyranny over him: and being subject to so many Masters, the poor Slave is continually divided and distracted between their contrary Commands and Impositions; one Passion hurries him one way, and another as violently drives him another; one Lust commands him upon such a Service, and another it may be at the same time calls him to another Work. His Pride and Ambition bids him spend and lay it out, whilst his Covetousness holds his Hand fast closed; so that he knows not many times how to dispose of himself or what to do, he must displease some of his Masters, and what Inclination soever he contradicts, he certainly displeaseth himself.

And that which aggravates the Misery of his Condition is, that he voluntarily submits to this Servitude. In other Cases Men are made Slaves against their wills, and are brought under the Force and Power of others, whom they are not able to resist; but the Sinner chooseth this Servitude, and willingly puts his neck under this yoke. There are few Men in the World so sick of their Liberty, and so weary of their own Happiness, as to choose this Condition; but the Sinner sells himself, and voluntarily parts with that Liberty which he might keep, and which none could take from him.

And, which makes this Condition yet more intolerable, he makes himself a Slave to his own Servants, to those who are born to be subject to him, to his own Appetites and Passions; and this certainly is the worst kind of Slavery, so much worse than that of Mines and Gallies, as the Soul is more Noble and Excellent than the Body.

Men are not usually so sensible of the Misery of this kind of Servitude, because they are govern'd by Sense more than Reason; but according to a true Judgment and Estimation of things, a vicious Course of Life is the saddest Slavery of all others. And therefore the Gospel represents it as a design every way worthy of the Son of God, to come down from Heaven, and to debase himself so far as to assume our Nature, and to submit to the Death of the Cross, on purpose to rescue us from this slavery, and to assert us into the liberty of the Sons of God. And this is the great design of the Doctrine of the Gospel, to free Men from the Bondage of their Lusts, and to bring them to the Service of God, whose Service is perfect Freedom. And therefore our Saviour tells us, *John viii. 31, 32.* That if we continue in his Word, i. e. if we obey his Doctrine, and frame our lives according to it, it will make us free; *Ye shall know (says he) the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.* And if we observe it, the Scripture delights very much to set forth to us the Benefits and Advantages of the Christian Religion by the Metaphor of Liberty and Redemption from Captivity and Slavery. Hence our Saviour is so often call'd the Redeemer and Deliverer, and is said to have obtained eternal Redemption for us. And the publishing of the Gospel is compared to the Proclaiming of the Year of Jubilee among the Jews, when all Persons that would were set at Liberty. *Isa. lxi. 1, 2.* The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, saith the Prophet, speaking in the Person of the Messiah, because he hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the Captives, and the opening of the Prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable Year of the Lord. And it is probable that upon this account likewise the Christian Doctrine or Law is by St. James call'd the Royal Law of liberty.

This is the great design of Christianity, to set Men free from the Slavery of their Lusts; and to this end the Apostle tells us, *Tit. ii. 14.* that Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. And herein the great Mercy and Compassion of God towards Mankind appeared, in that he sent his Son to rescue us from

that Servitude which we had long groaned under, *that being made free from Sin, we might become the Servants of God, and the Servants of Righteousness.*

And this he hath done, not only by the price of his Blood, but by the Power and Purity of his Doctrine, and the Holy Example of his Life, and by all those Considerations which represent to us the Misery of our sinful state, and the infinite danger of continuing in it: and on the other Hand, by setting before us the Advantages of a Religious and Holy Life, and what a blessed change we make, when we quit the Service of Sin, and become the Servants of God. It will not only be a mighty present Benefit to us, but will make us happy to all Eternity; and these are the *Two* Considerations which at first I propounded to speak to at this Time.

First, The present Benefit of an Holy and Virtuous Life, which the Apostle here calls *Fruit*: *But now being free from Sin, and become the Servants of God, ye have your Fruit unto holiness.*

Secondly, The future Reward and Recompence of it; *and the end everlasting Life.*

First, Let us consider the present Benefit and Advantage of an Holy and Virtuous Life, which the Apostle here calls *Fruit*. If all things be truly consider'd, there is no Advantage comes to any Man by a wicked and vicious course of Life. A wicked Life is no present Advantage; the reflection upon it afterwards is shameful and troublesome; and the end of it miserable. But on the contrary, the Advantages of an holy and good Life are many and great even in this World, and upon temporal accounts, abstracting from the Consideration of a future Reward in the World to come.

I shall instance in *Five* or *Six* eminent Advantages which it usually brings to Men in this World.

- I. It brings great Peace and Contentment of Mind.
- II. It is a very fit and proper Means to promote our outward temporal Interest.
- III. It tends to the lengthening our Days, and hath frequently the Blessing of long Life attending upon it.
- IV. It gives a Man great Peace and Comfort when he comes to die.
- V. After Death it transmits a good Name and Reputation to Posterity.
- VI. It derives a Blessing upon our Posterity after us. And these are certainly the greatest Blessings that a wise Man can aim at, and design to himself in this World. Every one of these taken severally is very considerable; but all of them together compleat a Man's temporal Felicity, and raise it to as high a pitch as is to be expected in this World.

I. A Religious and Virtuous course of Life is the best way to Peace and Contentment of Mind, and does commonly bring it. And to a wise Man, that knows how to value the ease and satisfaction of his own Mind, there cannot be a greater temptation to Religion and Virtue, than to consider that it is the best and only way to give rest to his Mind. And this is present *Fruit* and ready Payment; because it immediately follows, or rather accompanies the Discharge of our Duty, *The fruit of righteousness is Peace*, saith the Prophet; and the Apostle to the *Hebrews* speaks of *the peaceable fruit of Righteousness*, meaning that inward Peace which a Righteous Man hath in his own Mind.

A Man needs not to take pains, or to use many Arguments, to satisfy and content his own Mind, after he hath done a good Action, and to convince himself, that he hath no cause to be troubled for it, for Peace and Pleasure do naturally spring from it: Nay, not only so, but there is an unexpressible kind of pleasure and delight that flows from the testimony of a good Conscience. Let but a Man take care to satisfy himself in the doing of his Duty, and whatever troubles and storms may be raised from without, all will be clear and calm within: For nothing but guilt can trouble a Man's Mind, and fright his Conscience, and make him uneasy to himself; *that* indeed will wound his Spirit, and sting his very Soul, and make him full of fearful and tormenting thoughts. This *Cain* found after he had committed that crying Sin of Murdering his Brother. *Gen. iv. 6. The Lord said unto Cain, why art thou wroth, and why is thy Countenance fallen?* His guilt made him full of Wrath, and discontent fill'd his Mind with vexation, and his Countenance with shame and confusion. When a Man's conscience is awaken'd to a sense of his

his guilt, it is angry and froward, and harder to be still'd than a peevish Child: But the practice of Holiness and Virtue does produce just the contrary effects; it fills a Man's Mind with Pleasure, and makes his Countenance chearful.

And this certainly, if it be well consider'd, is no small and contemptible advantage. The peace and tranquillity of our Minds is the great thing which all the Philosophy and Wisdom of the World did always design to bring Men to, as the very utmost happiness that a wise Man is capable of in this Life: and 'tis that which no considerate Man would part with for all that this World can give him. The greatest fortune in this World ought to be no temptation to any Man in his Wits, to submit to perpetual Sickness and Pain for the gaining of it; and yet there is no disease in the World, that for the sharpness of it is comparable to the sting of a guilty Mind, and no pleasure equal to that of Innocence and a good Conscience. And this naturally springs up in the Mind of a good Man, where it is not hinder'd either by a melancholy Temper, or by false Principles in Religion, which fill a Man with groundless fears and jealousies of the love and favour of God towards him; and excepting these two cases, this is the ordinary fruit of an holy and good course, which is not interrupted by frequent falling into Sin, and great omissions and violations of our Duty: For in this case the interruptions of our Peace and Comfort will naturally be answerable to the inequality of our Obedience.

II. Besides the present and inestimable Fruit of Holiness, the quiet and satisfaction of our own Minds; it is likewise a proper means to promote our Interest and Happiness in this World. For as every Vice is naturally attended with some temporal Inconvenience of Pain or Loss; so there is no Grace or Virtue, but does apparently conduce to a Man's temporal Felicity. There are some Virtues which tend to the Health of his Body, and the prolonging of his Life, as Temperance and Chastity; others tend to Riches and Plenty, as Diligence and Industry in our callings; others to the secure and peaceable Enjoyment of what we have, as Truth and Fidelity, Justice and Honesty in all our dealings and intercourse with Men. There are other Virtues that are apt to oblige Mankind to us, and to gain their Friendship and good Will, their Aid and Assistance, as Kindness, and Meekness, and Charity, and a generous Disposition to do good to all, as far as we have Power and Opportunity. In a word, there is no real Interest of this World but may ordinarily be as effectually promoted and pursued to as great Advantage by a Man that exercises himself in the Practice of all Virtue and Goodness, and usually to far greater Advantage, than by one that is Intemperate and Debauch'd, Deceitful and Dishonest, apt to disoblige and provoke, sour and ill-natur'd to all Mankind: For there is none of these Vices but is to a Man's real hindrance and disadvantage, in regard of one kind of Happiness or another, which Men aim at and propose to themselves in this World.

III. A Religious and Virtuous Course of Life doth naturally tend to the prolonging of our Days, and hath very frequently the Blessing of Health and long Life attending upon it. The Practice of a great many Virtues is a great Preservative of Life and Health, as the due government of our Appetites and Passions by Temperance and Chastity and Meekness, which prevent the chief Causes from within of Bodily Diseases and Distempers; the due government of our Tongues and Conversation in respect of others, by Justice and Kindness, and abstaining from Wrath and Provocation, which are a great security against the dangers of outward Violence, according to that of St. Peter, 1 Epist. iii. 10. *He that will love life and see good Days, let him refrain his Tongue from evil, and his Lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good, let him seek peace and ensue it.*

And beside the natural tendency of things, there is a special Blessing of God which attends good Men, and makes *their Days long in the land which the Lord their God hath given them.*

IV. There is nothing gives a Man so much Comfort when he comes to die, as the reflection upon an holy and good Life: and then surely above all other times Comfort is most valuable, because our frail and infirm Nature doth then stand most in need of it. Then usually Mens Hearts are faint and their Spirits low, and every thing is apt to deject and trouble them; so that we had need to provide our
selves

selves of some excellent Cordial against that time; and there is no Comfort like to that of a clear Conscience, and of an innocent and useful Life. This will revive and raise a Man's Spirits under all the Infirmities of his Body, because it gives a Man good hopes concerning his Eternal State, and the hopes of that are apt to fill a Man with *Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*.

The difference between good and bad Men is never so remarkable in this World, as when they are upon their Death-Bed. This the Scripture observes to us. *Psal. xxxvij. 37. Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the end of that Man is peace.*

With what Triumph and Exultation doth the Blessed Apostle St. Paul, upon the review of his Life, discourse concerning his Death and Dissolution? *2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8. I am now ready, says he, to be offer'd up, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good fight, I have finish'd my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that Day.* What would not any of us do to be thus affected when we come to leave the World, and to be able to bear the thoughts of Death and Eternity with so quiet and well satisfy'd a Mind! Why, let us but endeavour to live Holy Lives, and to be useful and serviceable to God in our Generation, as this holy Apostle was, and we shall have the same ground of Joy and Triumph which he had. For this is the proper and genuine effect of Virtue and Goodness; *The work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.* All the good Actions that we do in this Life are so many seeds of Comfort sown in our own Consciences, which will spring up one time or other, but especially in the approaches of Death, when we come to take a serious review of our Lives; for then Mens Consciences use to deal plainly and impartially with them, and to tell them the truth; and if at that time more especially *our Hearts condemn us not, then may we have comfort and confidence towards God.*

V. An Holy and Virtuous Life doth transmit a good Name and Reputation to Posterity. And this Solomon hath determined to be a much greater Happiness, than for a Man to leave a great Estate behind him: *A good Name, says he, is rather to be chosen than great Riches.* Pious and Virtuous Men do commonly gain to themselves a good Esteem and Reputation in this World, while they are in it; but the Virtues of good Men are not always so bright and shining as to meet with that respect and acknowledgment which is due to them in this World. Many times they are much clouded by the Infirmities and Passions which attend them, and are shadowed by some affected singularities and morosities which those which have liv'd more retir'd from the World are more liable to. Besides that the envy of others, who are not so good as they, lies heavy upon them, and does depress them. For bad Men are very apt to misinterpret the best Actions of the good, and put false colours upon them, and when they have nothing else to object against them, to charge them with Hypocrisy and Insincerity; an Objection as hard to be answer'd, as it is to be made good, unless we could see into the Hearts of Men.

But when good Men are dead and gone, and the bright and shining Example of their Virtues is at a convenient distance, and does not gall and upbraid others, then Envy ceaseth, and every Man is then content to give a good Man his due Praise, and his Friends and Posterity may then quietly enjoy the Comfort of his Reputation, which is some sort of Blessing to him that is gone. This Difference Solomon observes to us between good and bad Men; *The memory of the just is blessed, or well spoke of: but the name of the wicked shall rot.*

VI. And lastly, Religion and Virtue do derive a Blessing upon our Posterity after us. *O that there were such an Heart in them, saith Moses concerning the People of Israel, that they would fear me, and keep all my Commandments always, that it might be well with them and their Children for ever!* And to this purpose there are many Promises in Scripture of God's blessing the Posterity of the righteous, and his shewing mercy to thousands of the Children of them that love him, and keep his Commandments.

And this is a great motive to Obedience, and toucheth upon that natural Affection which Men bear to their Children; so that if we have any Regard to them, or Concernment for their Happiness, we ought to be very careful of our Duty, and

and afraid to offend God; because according as we demean our selves towards him, we entail a lasting Blessing or a great Curse upon our Children; by so many and so strong bonds hath God tyed our Duty upon us, that if we either desire our own Happiness, or the Happiness of those that are dearest to us, and part of our selves, we must *fear God and keep his Commandments.*

And thus I have briefly represented to you some of the chief Benefits and Advantages which an Holy and Virtuous Life does commonly bring to Men in this World, which is the *first* Encouragement mention'd in the Text; *Ye have your Fruit unto Holiness.*

Before I proceed to the *Second*, I shall only just take notice, by way of Application, of what has been said on this Argument.

1. That it is a great Encouragement to well-doing, to consider that ordinarily Piety and Goodness are no hindrance to a Man's temporal Felicity, but very frequently great promoters of it, so that excepting only the case of Persecution for Religion, I think I may safely challenge any Man to shew me how the Practice of any Part or Duty of Religion, how the exercise of any Grace or Virtue is to the prejudice of a Man's temporal Interest, or does debar him of any true Pleasure, or hinder him of any real Advantage, which a prudent and considerate Man would think fit to choose. And as for Persecution and Sufferings for Religion, God can reward us for them, if he please, in this World; and we have all the assurance that we can desire, that he will do it abundantly in the next.

2. The hope of long Life, and especially of a quiet and comfortable Death, should be a great Encouragement to an Holy and Virtuous Life. He that lives well, takes the best course to live long, and lays in for an happy old Age, free from the Diseases and Infirmities which are naturally procur'd by a vicious Youth, and likewise free from the guilt and galling Remembrance of a wicked Life. And there is no condition which we can fall into in this World, that does so clearly discover the difference between a good and bad Man, as a Death-bed: For then the good Man begins most sensibly to enjoy the comforts of Well-doing, and the Sinner to taste the bitter Fruits of Sin. What a wide difference is then to be seen between the hopes and fears of these two sorts of Persons! And surely next to the actual possession of Blessedness, the good hopes and comfortable prospect of it are the greatest Happiness; and next to the actual sense of Pain, the fear of Suffering is the greatest Torment.

Tho' there were nothing beyond this Life to be expected, yet if Men were sure to be possess'd with these delightful or troublesome Passions when they come to die, no Man that wisely considers things would, for all the Pleasures of Sin, forfeit the Comfort of a Righteous Soul leaving this World full of the hope of Immortality; and endure the vexation and anguish of a guilty Conscience, and that infinite terror and amazement which so frequently possesseth the Soul of a dying Sinner.

3. If there be any spark of a generous mind in us, it should animate us to do well, that we may be well spoken of when we are gone off the Stage, and may transmit a grateful Memory of our lives to those that shall be after us. I proceed now to the

Second Thing I propos'd, as the great Advantage indeed, *viz.* The glorious Reward of a Holy and Virtuous Life in another World, which is here called *everlasting Life*; *And the end everlasting Life*; by which the Apostle intends to express to us, both the Happiness of our future State, and the Way and Means whereby we are prepared and made meet to be made partakers of it; and that is by the constant and sincere Endeavours of an holy and good Life. For 'tis they only that *have their fruit unto Holiness*, whose *end* shall be *everlasting Life*. I shall speak briefly to these *two*, and so conclude my discourse upon this Text.

1. The Happiness of our future State, which is here express'd by the name of *everlasting Life*, in very few words, but such as are of wonderful weight and significancy: For they import the Excellency of this state, and the Eternity of it. And who is sufficient to speak to either of these Arguments? Both of them are too big to enter now into the heart of Man, too vast and boundless to be comprehended by human understanding, and too unwieldy to be manag'd by the Tongue of Men and Angels, answerable to the unspeakable greatness and glory of them.

And

And if I were able to declare them unto you, as they deserv'd, you would not be able to hear me. And therefore I shall choose to say but little upon an Argument of which I can never say enough, and shall very briefly consider those *two* things which are comprehended in that short description which the Text gives us of our future Happiness, by the name of *everlasting Life*, viz. The Excellency of this state, and the Eternity of it.

1. The Excellency of it, which is here represented to us under the notion of *Life*, the most desirable of all other things, because it is the Foundation of all other Enjoyments whatsoever. Barely to be in Being, and to be sensible that we are so, is but a dry Notion of Life. The true Notion of Life is to be well and to be happy, *vivere est bene valere*. They who are in the most miserable Condition that can be imagin'd, are in Being, and sensible also that they are miserable. But this kind of Life is so far from coming under the true Notion of Life, that the Scripture calls it *the second Death*, Rev. xxi. 8. It is there said, that *The wicked shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second Death*. And Chap. xx. v. 6. *Blessed and holy is he, that hath part in the first Resurrection, on such the second Death shall have no power*. So that a state of meer misery and torment is not Life but Death; nay, the Scripture will not allow the Life of a wicked Man in this World to be true Life, but speaks of him as dead, *Ephes. ii. 1*. speaking of the Sinners among the Gentiles, *You*, saith the Apostle, *hath he quicken'd who were dead in trespasses and sins*. And which is more yet, the Scripture calls a Life of sinful Pleasures (which Men esteem the only Happiness of this World) the Scripture, I say, calls this a Death, *1 Tim. v. 6*. *She that liveth in pleasure, is dead whilst she liveth*. A lewd and unprofitable Life, which serves to no good end and purpose, is a Death rather than a Life. Nay, that decaying and dying Life which we now live in this World, and which is allay'd by the mixture of so many infirmities and pains, of so much trouble and sorrow, I say, that even this sort of Life, for all that we are so fondly in love with it, does hardly deserve the name of Life. But the Life of the World to come, of which we now speak, this is Life indeed; to do those things which we were made for, to serve the true Ends of our Being, and to enjoy the Comfort and Reward of so doing, this is the true notion of Life; and whatever is less than this, is Death, or a degree of it, and approach towards it. And therefore very well may Heaven and Happiness be describ'd by the notion of Life, because *truly to live* and *to be happy* are words that signify the same thing.

But what kind of Life this is, I can no more describe to you in the particularities of it, than *Columbus* could have described the particular Manners and Customs of the People of *America*, before he or any other Person in these parts of the World had seen it or been there. But this I can say of it in general, and that from the infallible testimony of the great Creator and glorious Inhabitants of that Blessed Place, that it is a State of pure Pleasure and unmingled Joys, of Pleasures more manly, more spiritual, and more refined, than any of the Delights of sense, consisting in the enlargement of our Minds and Knowledge to a greater degree, and in the perfect exercise of Love and Friendship, in the Conversation of the best and wisest Company, free from Self-interest, and all those unsociable Passions of Envy and Jealousy, of Malice and Ill-will, which spoil the Comfort of all Conversation in this World; and, in a word, free from all other Passion or Design, but an ardent and almost equal desire to contribute all, that by all means possible they can, to the mutual Happiness of one another: For Charity reigns in Heaven, and is the brightest Grace and Virtue in the Firmament of Glory, far outshining all other; as *St. Paul*, who had himself been taken up into the third Heaven, does expressly declare to us.

Farther yet, this blessed State consists more particularly in these two things: In having our Bodies rais'd and refined to a far greater Purity and Perfection than ever they had in this World; and in the consequent Happiness of the whole Man, Soul and Body, so strictly and firmly united as never to be parted again, and so equally match'd as to be no trouble or impediment to one another.

(1.) In having our Bodies rais'd and refined to a greater Purity and Perfection than ever they had in this World. Our Bodies as they are now are unequally tempered, and in a perpetual flux and change, continually tending to Corruption,

because made up of such contrary Principles and Qualities as by their perpetual conflict are always at work, conspiring the Ruin and Dissolution of them: but when they are raised again, they shall be so temper'd and so refin'd as to be free from all those destructive Qualities which do now threaten their change and dissolution: And tho' they shall still consist of Matter, yet they shall be purified to that degree, as to partake of the Immortality of our Souls, to which they shall be united, and to be of equal duration with them. So the Scripture tells us, *1 Cor. xv. 52, 53. That our dead Bodies shall be raised incorruptible: for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

Our Bodies when they are laid down in the Grave are vile Carcases, but they shall be raised again Beautiful and Glorious, and as different from what they were before, as the Heavenly Mansions in which they are to reside for ever are from that dark Cell of the Grave out of which they are raised; and shall then be endowed with such a Life and Strength and Vigour, as to be able without any change or decay to abide and continue for ever in the same state.

Our Bodies in this World are gross Flesh and Blood, liable to be affected with natural and sensual Pleasures, and to be afflicted with natural Pains and Diseases, to be press'd with the natural necessities of Hunger and Thirst, and obnoxious to all those Changes and Accidents to which all natural things are subject: But *they shall be raised spiritual Bodies*, pure and refined from all the dregs of Matter; they shall not hunger, nor thirst, nor be diseased, or in Pain any more.

These Houses of Clay, whose Foundation is in the dust, are continually decaying, and therefore stand in need of continual Reparation by Food and Physick: But *our House which is from Heaven* (as the Apostle calls it) shall be of such lasting and durable Materials, as not only Time, but even Eternity it self, shall make no Impression upon it, or cause the least decay in it. *They* (says our Blessed Saviour) *who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that World, and the Resurrection from the dead, cannot die any more: but shall be like the Angels, and are the Children of God, i. e. shall in some degree partake of the Felicity and Immortality of God himself, who is always the same, and whose years fail not.* Nay, the Apostle expressly tells us, that our Bodies after the Resurrection shall be *spiritual Bodies*, so that we shall then be as it were all Spirit, and our Bodies shall be so raised and refined, that they shall be no clog or impediment to the Operation of our Souls. And it must needs be a great comfort to us whilst we are in this World, to live in the hopes of so happy and glorious a change; when we consider how our Bodies do now oppress our Spirits, and what a melancholy and dead weight they are upon them, how grievous an Incumbrance and Trouble and Temptation they are for the most part to us in this mortal state.

(2.) The blessedness of this state consists likewise in the consequent Happiness of the whole Man, Soul and Body, so strictly and firmly united as never to be parted again, and so equally matched as to be no trouble and impediment to one another.

In this World the Soul and Body are for the most part very unequally yoked, so that the Soul is not only darken'd by the gross Fumes and Clouds which rise from the Body, but loaded and oppress'd by the dull weight of it, which it very heavily lugs on and draws after it; and the Soul likewise, and the vicious Inclinations and the irregular Passions of it, have many times an ill Influence upon the Body and the Humours of it. But in the next World they shall both be purified, the one from Sin, and the other from Frailty and Corruption, and both be admitted to the blessed sight and enjoyment of the ever-blessed God.

But the Consideration of this (as I said before) is too big for our narrow apprehensions in this mortal state, and an Argument not fit to be treated of by such Children as the wisest of Men are in this World; and whenever we attempt to speak of it, we do but lisp like Children, and understand like Children, and reason like Children about it, *That which is imperfect must be done away*, and our Souls must be raised to a greater Perfection, and our Understandings fill'd with a stronger and steadier Light, before we can be fit to engage in so profound a Contemplation. We must first have been in Heaven, and possess'd of that Felicity and Glory which is there to be enjoy'd, before we can either speak or think of it in any measure as it deserves. In the mean time, whenever we set about it, we shall find our Faculties oppress'd and dazzled with the weight and splendor of so great

and glorious an Argument; like *St. Paul*, who when *he was caught up into Paradise*, saw and heard those things which when he came down again into this World he was not able to express, and which it was not possible for the Tongue of Man to utter.

So that in discoursing of the state of the Blessed, we must content our selves with what the Scripture hath revealed in general concerning it; that it is a state of perfect freedom from all those Infirmities and Imperfections, those Evils and Miseries, those Sins and Temptations which we are liable to in this World. So *St. John* describes the Glory and Felicity of that state, as they were in Visions represented to him, *Rev. xxi. 2, 3, 4. And I John saw the holy City, the new Jerusalem, prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband. And I heard a great Voice out of Heaven, saying, Behold the Tabernacle of God is with Men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his People, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away: that is, all those Evils which we saw or suffered in this World, shall for ever vanish and disappear, and, which is the great Privilege and Felicity of all, that there shall no Sin be there, V. 27. There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, and consequently there shall be no Misery and Curse there. So we read, Chap. xxii. 3, 4. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face.* In which last Words our Employment and our Happiness are express'd; but what in particular our Employment shall be, and wherein it shall consist, is impossible now to describe; it is sufficient to know in the general, that our Employment shall be our unspeakable Pleasure, and every way suitable to the Glory and Happiness of that state, and as much above the noblest and most delightful Employments of this World, as the Perfection of our Bodies, and the Powers of our Souls, shall then be above what they are now in this World.

For there is no doubt, but that he who made us, and endued our Souls with a desire of Immortality, and so large a Capacity of Happiness, does understand very well by what way and means to make us happy, and hath in readiness proper Exercises and Employments for that state, and every way more fitted to make us Happy, than any Condition or Employment in this World is suitable to a temporal Happiness; Employments that are suitable to *the spirits of just Men made perfect*, united to Bodies purified and refined almost to the Condition of Spirits; Employments which we shall be so far from being weary of, that they shall minister to us a new and fresh delight to all Eternity; and this, perhaps, not so much from the variety, as from the perpetual and growing Pleasure of them.

It is sufficient for us to know this in the general, and to trust the infinite Power and Wisdom and Goodness of God, for the particular manner and circumstances of our Happiness: not doubting but that he, who is the eternal and inexhaustible Spring and Fountain of all Happiness, can and will derive and convey such a share of it to every one of us as he thinks fit, and in such ways as he, who best understands it, is best able to find out.

In a word, the Happiness of the next Life shall be such as is worthy of the great King of the World to bestow upon his faithful Servants, and such as is infinitely beyond the just Reward of their best Services; it is *to see God*, i. e. to contemplate and love the best and most perfect of Beings, and *to be for ever with the Lord, in whose Presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

I will say no more upon this Argument, lest I should say less, and because whoever ventures to wade far into it will soon find himself out of his depth, and in danger to be swallow'd up and lost in that great Abyfs which is not to be fathomed by the shallow Faculties of mortal Men.

I shall therefore only mention the

2. Thing I propos'd to speak to, *viz. The Eternity of this Happiness: And the end everlasting Life*: by which the Apostle intends to express the utmost Perfection, but not the final Period of the Happiness of good Men in another World. For to a perfect state of Happiness these two Conditions are requisite, that it be immutable, and that it be interminable, that it can neither admit of a change nor of

an end. And this is all that I shall say of it, it being impossible to say any thing that is more intelligible and plain, concerning that which is infinite, than that it is so. I should now have proceeded to the

II. Thing I propos'd, *viz.* By what Way and Means we may be prepared, and made meet to be made partakers of this Happiness; and that is (as I have told you all along) by the constant and sincere endeavour of an holy and good Life; for the Text supposeth that they only who are *made free from Sin, and become the Servants of God, and who have their Fruit unto Holiness,* are they whose end shall be *everlasting Life*. But this is an Argument which I have had so frequent occasion to speak to, that I shall not now meddle with it. All that I shall do more at present shall be to make an Inference or two from what hath been said upon this Argument.

I. The Consideration of the Happy State of good Men in another World, cannot but be a great comfort and support to good Men under all the Evils and Sufferings of this present Life. Hope is a great Cordial to the Minds of Men, especially when the thing hoped for does so vastly out weigh the present grievance and trouble. The Holy Scriptures, which reveal to us the Happiness of our future state, do likewise assure us that there is no comparison between the Afflictions and Sufferings of good Men in this World, and the Reward of them in the other. *I reckon (saith St. Paul) Rom. viii. 18. that the Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us.*

Particularly the Consideration of that glorious Change which shall be made in our Bodies at the Resurrection, ought to be a great comfort to us under all the Pains and Diseases which they are now liable to, and even against Death it self. One of the greatest burdens of human Nature, is the frailty and infirmity of our Bodies, the necessities which they are frequently press'd withal, the Diseases and Pains to which they are liable, and *the fear of Death*, by reason whereof a great part of Mankind are *subject to Bondage*; against all which this is an everlasting Spring of Consolation to us, that the time is coming when we shall have other sort of Bodies, freed from that burden of Corruption which we now groan under, and from all those Miseries and Inconveniencies which Flesh and Blood are now subject to. For the time will come, when *these vile Bodies*, which we now wear, *shall be changed, and fashioned like to the glorious Body of the Son of God*; and when they shall be raised at the last Day, they shall not be raised such as we laid them down, Vile and Corruptible, but Immortal and Incorruptible: for the same Power which hath raised them up to Life, shall likewise change them, and put a glory upon them like to that of the glorified Body of our Lord; and when this glorious Change is made, *when this corruptible hath put on incorruption, and this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory*; and when this last enemy is perfectly subdued, we shall be set above all the Frailties and Dangers, all the Temptations and Sufferings of this mortal state; there will be then no *fleshy Lusts* and brutish Passions *to war against the Soul*; no *law in our Members* to rise up in Rebellion against *the law of our Minds*; no Diseases to torment us, no danger of Death to terrify us; all the Motions and Passions of our outward Man shall then be perfectly subject to the Reason of our Minds, and our Bodies shall partake of the Immortality of our Souls. How should this Consideration bear us up under all the Evils of Life and the Fears of Death, that the Resurrection will be a perfect Cure of all our Infirmities and Diseases, and an effectual Remedy of all the Evils that we now labour under; and that it is but a very little while that we shall be troubled with these Frail, and Mortal, and Vile Bodies, which shall shortly be laid in the dust, and when they are raised again, shall become Spiritual, Incorruptible, and Glorious.

And if our Bodies shall undergo so happy a Change, what Happiness may we imagine shall then be conferred upon our Souls, that so much better and nobler part of our selves! As the Apostle reasons in another case, *Doth God take care of Oxen?* Hath he this Consideration of our Bodies, which are but the brutish part of the Man? What regard will he then have to his own Image, that spark of Divinity which is for ever to reside in these Bodies? If upon the account of our Souls, and for their sakes, our Bodies shall become *Incorruptible, Spiritual and*

Glorious; then certainly our Souls shall be endued with far more Excellent and Divine Qualities: if our Bodies shall in some degree partake of the Perfection of our Souls in their Spiritual and Immortal Nature, to what a pitch of Perfection shall our Souls be raised and advanced! even to an equality with Angels, and to some kind of participation of the Divine Nature and Perfection, so far as a Creature is capable of them.

II. The Comparison which is here in the Text, and which I have largely explain'd, between the manifest Inconveniencies of a Sinful and Vicious Course, and the manifold Advantages of an Holy and Virtuous Life, is a plain direction to us which of these two to choose. So that I may make the same appeal that *Moses* does, after that he had at large declared the Blessings promis'd to the Obedience of God's Laws, and the Curse denounc'd against the Violation and Transgression of them, *Deut. xxx. 19. I call Heaven and Earth to record against you this Day, that I have set before you Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing; therefore choose Life, that you may be happy in Life and Death, and after Death to all Eternity. I know every one is ready to choose Happiness, and to say with Balaam, Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my latter end be like his: but if we do in good earnest desire the End, we must take the Way that leads to it; we must become the Servants of God, and have our fruit unto holiness, if ever we expect that the end shall be everlasting Life.*

S E R M O N CXIII.

The Nature and Necessity of holy Resolution.

*The First
Sermon on
this Text.*

J O B XXXIV. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done Iniquity, I will do no more.

THESE words are the words of *Elihu*, one of *Job's* Friends, and the only one who is not reprov'd for his Discourse with *Job*, and who was probably the Author of this ancient and most eloquent History of the sufferings and patience of *Job*, and of the end which the Lord made with him; and they contain in them a Description of the temper and behaviour of a true Penitent. *Surely it is meet, &c.*

In which words we have the Two essential parts of a true Repentance.

First, An humble Acknowledgment and Confession of our Sins to God, *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement.*

Secondly, A firm Purpose and Resolution of amendment and forsaking of Sin for the future, *I will not offend any more; If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

First, An humble Acknowledgment and Confession of our Sins to God; *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement*, that is, have sinned and been justly punish'd for it, and am now convinced of the Evil of Sin, and resolved to leave it; *I have born chastisement, I will offend no more.*

Of this *First* Part of Repentance, *viz.* an humble Confession of our Sins to God, with great Shame and Sorrow for them, and a thorough Conviction of the Evil and Danger of a sinful Course, I have already treated at large. In these Repentance must begin, but it must not end in them: for a penitent Confession of our Sins to God, and a Conviction of the evil of them, signifies nothing, unless it brings us to a Resolution of amendment, that is, of leaving our Sins, and betaking our selves to a better Course. And this I intend, by God's assistance, to speak to now, as being the

Second

Second Part of a true Repentance here described in the Text, *viz.* A firm Purpose and Resolution of Amendment and forsaking of Sin for the future; and to express it the more strongly and emphatically, and to shew the firmness of the Resolution, it is repeated again, *I will not offend any more*; and then in the next verse, *If I have done iniquity, I will do no more*. And this is so necessary a part of Repentance, that herein the very essence and formal Nature of Repentance does consist, *viz.* in the firm and sincere Purpose and Resolution of a better Course.

In the handling of this Argument, I shall do these *Six* things.

- I. I shall shew what Resolution is in general.
- II. What is the special Object of this kind of Resolution.
- III. What is implied in a sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins, and returning to God.
- IV. I shall shew that in this Resolution of Amendment, the very Essence and formal Nature of Repentance does consist.
- V. I shall offer some Considerations to convince Men both of the necessity and fitness of this Resolution, and of keeping stedfastly to it. *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more.*

VI. I shall add some brief directions concerning the managing and maintaining of this holy and necessary Resolution.

I. What Resolution in general is. It is a fix'd Determination of the Will about any thing, either to do it, or not to do it, as upon due deliberation we have judged and concluded it to be necessary or convenient to be done, or not to be done by us: And this supposeth *three* things.

1. Resolution supposeth a precedent deliberation of the Mind about the thing to be resolv'd upon. For no prudent Man does determine or resolve upon any thing till he hath considered the thing, and weigh'd it well with himself, and hath fully debated the necessity and expedience of it; what advantage he shall have by the doing of it, and what danger and inconvenience will certainly or very probably redound to him by the neglect and omission of it. For peremptorily to determine and resolve upon any thing before a Man hath done this, is not properly Resolution, but precipitancy and rashness.

2. Resolution supposeth some Judgment pass'd upon the thing, after a Man hath thus deliberated about it; that he is satisfied in his Mind one way or other concerning it, that his Understanding is convinced either that it is necessary and convenient for him to do it; or that it is not? and this is sometimes call'd Resolution, but is not that Resolution which immediately determines a Man to action. This judgment of the necessity and fitness of the thing, is not the Resolution of the Will, but of the Understanding: for it does not signify that a Man hath fully determined to do the thing, but that he hath determined with himself that it is reasonable to be done, and that he is no longer in doubt and suspense whether it be best for him to do it or not, but is in his Mind resolved and satisfied one way or other. And these are two very different things; to be resolved in one's Judgment, that is, to be convinced that a thing is fit and necessary to be done, and to be resolved to set upon the doing of it; for many Men are thus convinced of the fitness and necessity of the thing, who yet have not the Heart, cannot bring themselves to a firm and fix'd Resolution to set upon the doing of it. So that an act of the Judgment must go before the Resolution of the Will: for as he is rash that resolves to do a thing before he hath deliberated about it; so he is blind and wilful that resolves to do a thing before his Judgment be satisfied, whether it be best for him to do it or not.

3. If the matter be of considerable moment and consequence, Resolution supposeth some motion of the Affections; which is a kind of Bias upon the Will, a certain Propension and Inclination that a Man feels in himself, either urging him to do a thing, or withdrawing him from it. Deliberation and Judgment they direct a Man what to do, or leave undone; the Affections excite and quicken a Man to take some Resolution in the matter, that is, to do suitably to the Judgment his Mind hath pass'd upon the thing. For instance; A great Sinner reflects upon his Life, and considers what he hath done, what the Course is that he lives in, and what the issue and consequence of it will probably or certainly be, whether it will make him happy or miserable in the conclusion; and debating the
Matter

Matter calmly and soberly with himself, he is satisfied and convinced of the Evil and Danger of a wicked Life, and consequently that it is best for him to resolve upon a better Course, that is, to repent. Now these thoughts must needs awaken in him fearful apprehensions of the wrath of Almighty God, which is due to him for his Sins, and hangs over him, and which he is every moment in danger of, if he goes on in his evil Course. These thoughts are apt likewise to fill him with Shame and Confusion, at the remembrance of his horrible Ingratitude to God his Maker, his best Friend and greatest Benefactor, and of his desperate Folly in provoking Omnipotent Justice against himself; whereupon he is heartily grieved and troubled for what he hath done; and these Affections of Fear and Shame and Sorrow being once up, they come with great violence upon the Will, and urge the Man to a speedy Resolution of changing his Course, and leaving the way he is in, which he is fully convinced is so Evil and Dangerous; and of betaking himself to another Course, which he is fully satisfied will be much more for his Safety and Advantage.

So that Resolution in general, is a fix'd Determination of the Will; that is, such a Determination as is not only for the present free from all wavering and doubting, but such as cannot prudently be altered, so long as Reason remains. For the Man who upon full Deliberation and Conviction of his Mind resolves upon any thing, cannot without the imputation of fickleness and inconstancy quit that Resolution, so long as he hath the same Reason which he had when he took it up, and is still satisfied that the Reason is good. For Instance; The Man who hath taken up a Resolution to be Sober, because of the ugliness and unreasonableness of Drunkenness, and the temporal Inconveniencies and eternal Damnation which that Sin exposeth a Man to; if these Reasons be true and good, can never prudently alter the Resolution which he hath taken, and return to that Sin again.

II. Let us consider what is the special Object or Matter of this Resolution, wherein the formal Nature of Repentance does consist, what it is that a Man when he repents resolves upon; and that I told you is to leave his Sin, and to return to God and his Duty; and this is the Resolution which the Penitent here described in the Text takes up, *I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* He resolves against all known Sin, *I will not offend any more*; and if through Ignorance he had sinned and done contrary to his Duty, he desires to be better instructed, that he may not offend again in the like kind. *That which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

So that the true Penitent resolves upon these two things.

1. To forsake his Sin. And
2. To return to God and his Duty.

1. To forsake his Sin: and this implies the quitting of his sinful Course whatever it had been; and that not only by abstaining from the outward Act and practice of every Sin, but by endeavouring to crucify and subdue the inward Affection and Inclination to it.

And it implies farther, the utter forsaking of Sin; for Repentance is not only a Resolution to abstain from Sin for the present, but never to return to it again. Thus *Ephraim*, when he repented of his Idolatry, he utterly renounced it, saying, *What have I to do any more with Idols?* *Hos. xiv. 8.* He that truly repents, is resolved to break off his sinful Course, and to abandon those Lusts and Vices which he was formerly addicted to, and lived in.

2. The true Penitent resolves likewise to return to God and his Duty: he does not stay in the negative part of Religion, he does not only resolve not to commit any Sin, but not to neglect or omit any thing that he knows to be his Duty; and if he has been ignorant of any part of his Duty, he is willing to know it, that he may do it; he is not only determined to forsake his Sin, which will make him miserable, but to return to God, who alone can make him happy: he is now resolved to love God, and to serve him as much as he hated and dishonour'd him before; and will now be as diligent to perform and practise all the Duties and Parts of Religion, as he was negligent of them before, and as ready to do all the good he can to all Men in any kind, as he was careless of these things before: These in general are the things which a true Penitent resolves upon, I proceed to the

III. Thing

III. Thing I proposed to consider, namely, what is implied in a sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins, and returning to God and our Duty. And this holy Resolution, if it be thorough and sincere, does imply in it these *three* things.

1. That it be Universal.
2. That it be a Resolution of the Means as well as of the End.
3. That it presently comes to effect, and be speedily and without delay put in Execution.

1. A sincere Resolution of amendment must be universal: a Resolution to forsake all Sin, and to return to our whole Duty, and every part of it; such a Resolution as that of holy *David*, *to hate every false way, and to have respect to all God's Commandments.*

This Resolution must be universal in respect of the whole Man; and with regard to all our Actions. In respect of the whole Man; for we must resolve not only to abstain from the outward Action of Sin, but this Resolution must have its effect upon our inward Man, and reach our very Hearts and Thoughts; it must restrain our Inclinations, and *mortify our Lusts and corrupt Affections, and renew us in the very Spirit of our minds*, as the Apostle expresses it.

And it must be universal, in respect of all our Actions. For this is not the Resolution of a sincere Penitent, to abstain only from gross and notorious, from scandalous and open Sins; but likewise to refrain from the Commission of those Sins which are small in the esteem of Men, and not branded with a Mark of publick Infamy and Reproach; to forbear Sin in secret, and when no Eye of Man sees us and takes notice of us. This is not a sincere Resolution, to resolve to practise the Duties and Virtues of Religion in publick, and to neglect them in private; to resolve to perform the Duties of the first Table, and to pass by those of the second; to resolve to serve God, and to take a liberty to defraud and cozen Men; to honour our Father which is in Heaven, and to injure and hate our Brethren upon Earth; *to love our Neighbour, and to hate our Enemy*, as the *Jews* did of old time; to resolve against Swearing, and to allow our selves the liberty to speak falsely, and to break our Word; to flee from Superstition, and to run into Faction; *to abhor Idols, and to commit Sacrilege*; to resolve to be devout at Church, and deceitful in our Shops; to be very scrupulous about lesser matters, and to be very zealous about indifferent things; *to tithe mint and anise and cummin, and to omit the weightier matters of the Law, Mercy and Fidelity and Justice*; to be very rigid in matters of Faith and Opinion, but loose in Life and Practice.

No; the Resolution of a sincere Penitent must be universal and uniform; it must extend alike to the forbearing of all Sin, and the exercise of every Grace and Virtue, and to the due practice and performance of every part of our Duty. The true Penitent must resolve for the future to abstain from all Sin, *to be holy in all manner of Conversation, and to abound in all the fruits of Righteousness, which by Jesus Christ are to the praise and glory of God.* For if a Man do truly repent of his wicked Life, there is the very same Reason why he should resolve against all Sin, as why he should resolve against any; why he should observe all the Commandments of God, as why he should keep any one of them. For as St. *James* reasons concerning him that wilfully breaks any one Commandment of God, that *he is guilty of all, and breaks the whole Law*; because the Authority of God is equally stamp'd upon all his Laws, and is violated and contemned by the wilful transgression of any one of them; *For he that hath said, thou shalt not kill, hath likewise said, thou shalt not commit adultery, and thou shalt not steal*: so he that resolves against any one Sin, or upon performance of any one part of his Duty, ought for the very same reason to make his Resolution universal; because one Sin is evil and provoking to God, as well as another, and the Performance of one part of our Duty good and pleasing to him, as well as another, and there is no difference. So that he that resolves against any Sin, upon wise and reasonable grounds, because of the Evil of it, and the danger of the Wrath of God to which it exposeth us, ought for the same reason to resolve against all Sin; because it is damnable *to commit adultery, and to steal, as well as to kill*; and that resolution against Sin which is not universal, it is a plain case that it is not true and sincere, and that it was not taken up out of the sense of the intrinsical Evil of Sin, and the danger of it in respect of God and the Judgment of another World (for this Reason holds against every Sin, and remains always the same) but that it was taken up upon some inferior

ferior Consideration, either because of the Shame and Infamy of it among Men, or because of some other temporal Inconvenience, which if the Man could be secur'd against, he would presently break his Resolution, and return to the Commission of that Sin with as much freedom as any other.

2. A sincere Resolution implies a Resolution of the Means as well as of the End. He that is truly and honestly resolved against any Sin, is likewise resolved to avoid as much as is possible the Occasions and Temptations which may lead or draw him to that Sin; or if they happen to present themselves to him, he is resolved to stand upon his Guard, and to resist them. In like manner he that sincerely resolves upon doing his Duty in any kind, must resolve upon the Means that are requisite and necessary to the due Discharge and Performance of that Duty. As he that resolves against that needless and useless Sin of Swearing in common Conversation, must resolve also *to set a Guard before the Door of his Lips*, seeing it is certain that it requires great care and attention, at least for some competent time, to get rid of a habit.

When *David* resolved *not to offend with his Tongue*, he resolved at the same time to be very watchful over himself, *Psal. xxxix. 1. I said I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my Tongue: I will keep my mouth as with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* For a Man to resolve against any Sin or Vice, and yet to involve himself continually in the occasions, and to run himself into the Company and Temptations which do naturally, and will almost necessarily lead and betray him into those Sins, is a plain evidence of Insincerity. This I take for a certain rule, that whatever can reasonably move a Man to resolve upon any End, will, if his Resolution be sincere and honest, determine him every whit as strongly to use all those Means which are necessary in order to that End. But of this I have spoken elsewhere.

3. A sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins, and returning to God and our Duty, does imply the present time, and that we are to resolve speedily and without delay to put this Resolution in practice; that we are peremptorily determined not to go one step farther in the ways of Sin, not to neglect any Duty that God requires of us, not for one moment; but immediately and forthwith to set upon the practice of it, so soon as occasion and opportunity is offer'd to us. And the Reason of this is evident; Because the very same Considerations that prevail upon any Man to take up this Resolution of amendment, and changing the Course of his Life, are every whit as prevalent to engage him to put this Resolution presently in practice and execution.

I deny not, but a Man may resolve upon a thing for the future, and when the time comes, may execute his Resolution, and this Resolution may for all that be very sincere and real, tho' it was delay'd to a certain time, because he did not see Reason to resolve to do the thing sooner: But it cannot be so in this Case of Repentance; because there can no good Reason be imagin'd, why a Man should resolve seven years hence to change his Course, and break off his sinful Life, but the very same Reason will hold as strongly, why he should do it presently and without delay; and over and besides this, there are a great many and powerful Reasons and Considerations why he should rather put this good Resolution in present Execution, than put it off and defer it to any farther time whatsoever.

What is it that puts thee upon this Resolution of leaving thy Sins, and urgeth thee to do it at all? Art thou resolved to leave Sin because it is so great an Evil? Why it is so for the present; the Evil of it is intrinsical to it, and cleaves to the very Nature of it, and is never to be separated from it; so that this is a present Reason, and as strong against it now, as ever it will be hereafter: nay, it is stronger at present; because if it be so great an Evil, the sooner we leave it the better.

Or dost thou resolve to forsake Sin, because thou art apprehensive of the danger and mischief of it, that it will expose thee to the wrath of God, and to the endless and intolerable Misery of another World? Why this reason likewise makes much more for the present leaving of it; because the longer thou continuest in a sinful and impenitent state, the greater is thy danger, and the greater Penalty thou wilt most certainly incur; by delaying to put this good Resolution in practice, thou dost increase and multiply the Causes of thy Fear. For hereby thou provokest God more, and every day dost incense his Wrath more and more against thee;

thee ; thou preparest more and more fuel for everlasting burnings, and treasurest up for thy self more wrath, against the day of wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God. Nay, thou dost not only encrease and aggravate, but thou dost hereby hasten thine own Misery and Ruin, and takest the most effectual Course that is possible, to bring thine own Fears, and the Vengeance of Almighty God so much the sooner upon thee. For nothing provokes God to take a speedier Course with Sinners, and does more quicken the pace of his Judgments, than wilful continuance in Sin.

And yet farther ; If thy Resolution be valuable and considerable to thee, thou takest the most effectual Course in the World to frustrate and defeat it. Thou art fully resolved to leave thy Sins hereafter, and thou thinkest thou hast reason for it : but by continuing in them for the present, thou provokest the Justice of Almighty God to cut thee off before thy Resolution has taken effect:

Again ; Dost thou resolve to leave thy Sins one time or other, because thereby thou hopest to put thy self into a Capacity of Pardon and Mercy, and of Eternal Life and Happiness ? Why this reason should move thee to do the thing as soon as is possible ; because the sooner thou forsakest thy Sins, thou hast the greater hope of finding Mercy and Forgiveness with God ; and the sooner thou beginnest a Holy Course, and the longer thou continuest therein, thou hast reason to expect a greater and more ample Reward. Thou canst not by holding off, hope to bring down Pardon and Mercy to lower Rates, and to obtain these hereafter upon easier Terms. No ; the Terms and Conditions of God's Mercy are already fix'd and establish'd, so as never to be alter'd.

So that whatever reason thou canst possibly alledge for taking up this Resolution, it is every whit as forcible and powerful to persuade thee to put it speedily in Execution.

And then there is this reason besides, and that a very considerable one, why thou should'st immediately put this Resolution in practice, and not delay it for a moment. Thou may'st at present do it much more certainly, and much more easily. Much more certainly ; because thou art surer of the present time, than thou canst be of the future. The present is in thy power, but not one moment more. And thou may'st at present do it more easily ; for the longer thou continuest in Sin, thy Resolution against it will still grow weaker, and the habit of Sin continually stronger. Thou wilt every day be more enslaved by the Power of thy Lusts, and thy heart will every day be more *harden'd through the deceitfulness of Sin*. All the change that time makes will still be for the worse, and more to thy disadvantage. Sin will be as pleasant to thee hereafter, and thou more loath to leave it, than at present. Sin was never mortified by Age. It will every day have more strength to bind thee and hold thee fast, and thou wilt have every day less to break loose from it. For by every Sin thou dost commit, thou addest a new degree to the strength and force of it ; and so much strength as thou addest to it, so much thou takest from thy self, and so much thou lovest of thine own Power and Liberty. For a Man and his Lusts are like Nature and a Disease, so much strength as the Disease gains, Nature loseth, and the Man is hereby doubly weaken'd ; for he does not only lose so much of his own strength, but the Enemy gets it.

Nay, thou dost hereby likewise forfeit that auxiliary Strength and Assistance which the Grace of God is ready to afford to Men, his restraining and his preventing Grace. For as a Man goes on in Sin, and advanceth in an evil Course, the Grace of God draws off by degrees, and his Holy Spirit doth insensibly leave him ; and when a Sinner is come to this, his best Resolutions will *vanish like the morning cloud, and the early dew which passeth away*.

So that it cannot be a true and sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins, if it do not take place, and have not its effect presently. For there is no Man that takes up a Resolution, upon weighty and considerable Reasons, of doing any thing, but if the Reasons upon which he takes it up urge him to do the thing at present, he will presently set about it ; and that Man is not resolved to do a thing, whatever he may pretend, who hath most reason to do it at present, and may best do it now, and yet delays it.

And thus I have opened to you the Nature of this Holy Resolution of leaving our Sins, and returning to God and our Duty; and have shewn what is necessarily imply'd in such a Resolution, if it be sincere and in good earnest; That it be Universal; and that it be a Resolution of the Means, as well as of the End; and that it presently take place and be put in Execution. And these are *three* the best Signs and Marks that I know of, whereby a Man may try and examine the truth and sincerity of that Resolution of Amendment which we call Repentance. If it be against all Sin, and have an equal regard to every part of our Duty; if when we resolve upon the End, that is, to avoid Sin, and to perform our Duty, we are equally resolved upon the Means that are necessary to those Ends; if the Resolution we have taken up commence presently, and from that day forward be duly executed and put in practice, then is our Repentance and Resolution of Amendment sincere: But if there be a defect in any of these, our Resolution is not as it ought to be.

S E R M O N CXIV.

The Nature and Necessity of holy Resolution.

The second
Sermon on
this Text.

J O B XXXIV. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done Iniquity, I will do no more.

THESE Words are the Description of the temper and behaviour of a true Penitent, and do contain in them the *two* essential Parts of a true Repentance.

First, An humble Acknowledgment and Confession of Sin.

Secondly, A firm Purpose and Resolution of amendment and forsaking our Sins for the future.

And this latter is so necessary a part of Repentance, that herein the very Essence and formal Nature of Repentance does consist. In handling of this Argument, I proposed to consider,

- I. What resolution in general is.
- II. What is the special Object or Matter of this kind of Resolution.
- III. What is imply'd in a sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins, and returning to God and our Duty.
- IV. To shew that in this Resolution of Amendment, the very Essence and formal Nature of Repentance doth consist.
- V. To offer some Considerations to convince Men of the necessity and fitness of this Resolution, and of keeping stedfast to it.
- VI. To add some Directions concerning the managing and maintaining this holy Resolution. The *three* first I have spoken to, I now proceed to the

IV. To shew that in this Resolution the very Essence and formal Nature of Repentance doth consist. A Man may do many reasonable Actions without an explicit Resolution. In things that are more easy and natural to us, Judgment and Resolution are all one; it is all one to judge a thing fit to be done, and to resolve to do it. But in matters of difficulty, when a Man is to strive against the Stream, and to oppose strong Habits that have taken deep root, there is nothing to be done without an explicit Resolution. No Man makes any remarkable change in his Life, so as to cross his Inclinations and Custom, without an express Resolution. For tho' a Man's Judgment be never so much convinced of the Reasonableness and Necessity of such a Change; yet unless a Man's Spirit be fortified and fix'd by Resolution, the power of Custom, and the violence of his own Inclinations will carry him against his Judgment. Now there is no change of a Man's Life can be
imagined,

imagined, wherein a Man offers greater violence to inveterate Habits, and to the strong Propensions of his present temper, than in this of Repentance. So that among all the Actions of a Man's Life, there is none that doth more necessarily require an exprefs Purpose, than Repentance does.

And that herein Repentance doth chiefly consist, I shall endeavour to make evident from Scripture, and from the common Apprehensions of Mankind concerning Repentance.

The Scripture, besides the several Descriptions of Repentance, useth two words to exprefs it to us, *μεταμέλεια* and *μεάνοια*. The former properly signifies the inward trouble and displeasure which Men conceive against themselves for having done amiss; which if it be *κατὰ Θεὸν λύπη*, a godly sorrow, it worketh in us *μεάνοιαν ἀμεταμέλητον*, as St. Paul calls it, a Repentance not to be repented of, that is, such a change of our Minds, which as we shall have no Cause to be troubled at, so no Reason to alter afterwards. And what is this but a firm, stedfast, and unalterable Resolution?

The Scripture likewise useth several Phrases of the like importance to describe Repentance by; as *forsaking and turning from Sin*, and *conversion and turning to God*. *Forsaking and turning from Sin*. Hence it is call'd *Repentance from dead Works*, Heb. vi. 1. and *turning to God*, Acts xxvi. 20. *I have shewed to the Gentiles, that they shall repent and turn to God*, that is, from the worship of Idols, to the true God. And we have both these together in the description which the Prophet gives of Repentance, Isa. lv. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his ways; and the unrighteous Man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord*. Now this change begins in the Sinner's Resolution of doing this; and the *unrighteous Man's forsaking his thoughts*, is nothing else but changing the purpose of his Mind, and resolving upon a better Course. And thus *Lactantius* describes it: *Agere autem pœnitentiam nihil aliud est, quam affirmare & profiteri se non amplius peccaturum*. To repent is nothing else but for a Man to declare and profess that he will sin no more. This is Repentance before Men. And Repentance before God, is a Resolution answerable to this Profession. And elsewhere saith the same Author, *The Greeks do most fully exprefs Repentance by the word μεάνοια because he that repents recovers his mind from his former folly, and is troubled at it: & confirmat animam suam ad rectius vivendum, and confirms his mind for a better Course*. And how is this done but by a Resolution?

And that this is the natural and true notion of Repentance appears, in that the Heathens did consent and agree in it. *Gellius* gives this description of it. *Pœnitere tum dicere solemus, cum quæ ipsi fecimus, ea nobis post incipiunt displicere, sententiamque in iis nostram demutamus*. We are said then to repent, when those things which we have done begin afterwards to displease us, and we change our resolution about them. And so likewise one of the Philosophers describes it; *Repentance is the beginning of Philosophy, a flying from foolish words and actions, καὶ τῆς ἀμεταμέλητης ζωῆς ἡ πρώτη παρασκευὴ*, and the first preparation of a life not to be repented of.

It is true indeed, Repentance supposeth the entire change of our Lives and Actions, and a continued state, as the proper Consequence of it: But Repentance is but the beginning of this change, which takes its rise from the Purpose and Resolution of our Minds; and if it be sincere and firm, it will certainly have this effect, to change our Lives; and if it be not so, it is not Repentance. For tho' in the Nature of the thing it be possible, that a Man may sincerely resolve upon a thing, and yet let fall his resolution afterwards, before it come into Act; yet in the Phrase of Scripture, nothing is call'd Repentance but such a Resolution as takes effect, so soon as there is opportunity for it. If we change our Resolution, and repent of our Repentance this is not that which St. Paul calls *Repentance unto Salvation*. So that no Man that reads and considers the Bible, can impose upon himself so grossly, as to conceit himself a true Penitent, and consequently to be in a state of Salvation, who hath been troubled for his Sins, and hath taken up a Resolution to leave them, if he do not pursue this Resolution, and act according to it.

V. I shall in the next place propound some Arguments and Considerations to persuade Men to this holy Resolution, and then to keep them firm and stedfast to it, so as never to change it after they have once taken it up.

First, I shall propound some Arguments to persuade Men to take up this Resolution; and they are these.

1. Consider that this Resolution of Repentance is nothing but what under the influence of God's Grace and holy Spirit, which are never wanting to the sincere endeavours of Men, is in your Power. And it is necessary to premise this; for unless this be clear'd, all the other Arguments that I can use will signify nothing. For nothing in the World could be more vain, than to take a great deal of pains to persuade Men to do a thing which they cannot do, to entreat them to attempt an Impossibility, and to urge and solicit them with all earnestness and importunity to do that which is absolutely and altogether out of their Power. All the Commands of God, and the Exhortations of his Word, and all the Promises and Threatnings whereby these Commands and Exhortations are enforc'd, do plainly suppose, either that it is in our Power to do the thing which God commands or exhorts us to; or else, if it be not (which I grant it is not) that God is ready by his Grace and Strength, if we be not wanting to our selves, to assist and enable us to those Ends and Purposes. For the Gospel supposeth a Power going along with it, and that the holy Spirit of God works upon the Minds of Men, to quicken and excite and assist them to their Duty. And if it were not so, the Exhortations of Preachers would be nothing else but a cruel and bitter mocking of Sinners, and an Ironical insulting over the misery and weakness of poor Creatures; and for Ministers to preach, or People to hear Sermons, upon other Terms, would be the vainest expence of time, and the idlest thing we do all the Week; and all our Dissuasives from Sin, and Exhortations to Holiness and a good Life, and vehement Persuasions of Men to strive to get to Heaven, and to escape Hell, would be just as if one should urge a blind Man, by many Reasons and Arguments taken from the Advantages of Sight, and the Comfort of that Sense, and the Beauty of external Objects, by all means to open his Eyes, and to behold the delights of Nature, to see his way, and to look to his steps, and should upbraid him, and be very angry with him for not doing so. Why, if Resolution be absolutely impossible to us, and a thing wholly out of our Power, it is just the same Case. But then we ought to deal plainly and openly with Men, and to tell them, that what we so earnestly persuade them to, is that which we certainly know they cannot do. So that it is necessary, if I intend that the following Considerations should do any good, to assure Men, that it is not impossible for them to make a Resolution of leaving their Sins, and returning to God.

It is a Power which every Man is naturally invested withal, to *Consider*, and *Judge*, and *Choose*. To *Consider*, that is, to weigh and compare things together, To *Judge*, that is, to determine which is best; and to *Choose*, that is, to resolve to do it or not: And there is nothing more evident and more universally acknowledged in temporal Cases, and in the Affairs and Concernments of this Life. In these matters Resolution is a thing ordinary and of frequent practice; it is the Principle of all great and considerable Actions. Men resolve to be great in this World, and by virtue of this Resolution, when they have once taken it up, what Industry will they not use! what hazards will they not run in the pursuit of their ambitious Designs! Difficulties and Dangers do rather whet their Courage, and set an edge upon their Spirits. Men resolve to be rich; the Apostle speaks of some *that will be rich*, 1 Tim. vi. *They that will be rich*: and tho' this be but a low and mean Design, yet these Persons, by virtue of this Resolution, will toil and take prodigious pains in it.

And as to spiritual things, every Man hath the same Power radically, that is, he hath the Faculties of Understanding and Will, but these are obstructed and hinder'd in their exercise, and strongly bias'd a contrary way by the Power of evil Inclinations and Habits; so that as to the exercise of this Power, and the effect of it in spiritual things, Men are in a sort as much disabled as if they were destitute of it. For 'tis in effect all one, to have no Understanding at all to consider things that are spiritual, as to have the Understanding blinded by an invincible Prejudice; to have no Liberty as to spiritual things, as to have the Will strongly bias'd against them. For a Man that hath this prejudice upon his Understanding, and this bias upon his Will, is to all intents and purposes as if he were destitute of these Faculties. But then we are not to understand this Impotency

tency to be absolutely natural, but accidental; not to be in the first Frame and Constitution of our Souls, but to have happened upon the depravation of Nature. It is not a want of natural Faculties, but the binding of them up and hindering their Operations to certain purposes. This Impotency proceeds from the Power of evil Habits. And thus the Scripture expresseth it, and compares an Impotency arising from bad Habits and Customs to a natural Impossibility; nothing coming nearer to Nature, than a powerful Custom. *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may ye also, that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.*

But now God by the Gospel hath designed the Recovery of Mankind from the slavery of Sin, and the Power of their Lusts; and therefore, as by the Death of Christ he hath provided a way to remove the guilt of Sin, so by the Spirit of Christ he furnisheth us with sufficient Power to destroy the Dominion of Sin. I say *sufficient*, if we be not wanting to our selves, but be *workers together with God*, and be as diligent *to work out our own salvation*, as he is ready *to work in us both to will and to do.*

So that when we persuade Men to repent and change their Lives, and to resolve upon a better Course, we do not exhort them to any thing that is absolutely out of their Powe, but to what they may do; though not of themselves, yet by the Grace of God, which is always ready to assist them, unless by their former gross neglects and long obstinacy in an evil Course, they have provoked God to withdraw his Grace from them. So that tho' considering our own strength abstractedly, and separately from the Grace of God, these things be not in our Power; yet the Grace of God puts them into our Power.

And this is so far from derogating from the Grace of God, that it is highly to the Praise of it. For if the Grace of God makes us able to repent and resolve upon a new Life, he that asserts this does not attribute his Repentance to himself, but to the Grace of God: nay, he that says that God's Grace excites, and is ready to assist Men to do what God commands, represents God immensely more good and gracious, than he that says that God commands Men to do that which by their natural Power they cannot do, and will condemn them for not doing it, and yet denies them that Grace which is necessary to the doing of it.

Let this then be establish'd as a necessary Consideration to prevent discouragement, that to resolve upon the change of our Lives, is that which by the Grace of God we are enabled to do, if we will. Resolution is no strange and extraordinary thing; it is one of the most common Acts that belongs to us as we are Men; but we do not ordinarily apply it to the best purposes. It is not so ordinary for Men to resolve to be good, as to be rich and great; not so common for Men to resolve against Sin, as to resolve against Poverty and Suffering. It is not so usual for Men to resolve to keep a good Conscience, as to keep a good Place. Indeed our corrupt Nature is much more opposite to this holy kind of Resolution. But then to balance and answer this, God hath promised greater and more immediate assistance to us in this case than in any other. There is a general blessing and common assistance promised to Resolution and Diligence about temporal things; and God's Providence doth often advance such Persons to riches and honour. *The diligent hand, with God's blessing makes rich*, as Solomon tells us, *Prov. x. 4. and xxij. 29. Seest thou* (says he) *a Man diligent in his business? He shall stand before Kings, he shall not stand before mean Men.* Now Diligence is the effect of a great and vigorous Resolution. But there is a special and extraordinary blessing and assistance that attends the Resolution and Endeavour of a holy Life. God hath not promised to *strengthen* Men with *all might* in the way to Riches and Honours, and to assist the ambitious and covetous designers of this World with *a mighty and glorious Power, such as raised up Jesus from the Dead*: but this he hath promised to those, who with a firm Purpose and Resolution do engage in the ways of Religion. Let us then shake off our sloth and listlessness, and in that strength and assistance which God offers, let us resolve to leave our Sins, and to amend our Lives.

2. Consider what it is that you are to resolve upon; to leave your Sins and to return to God and Goodness. So that the things I am persuading you to resolve upon, are the strongest Reasons that can be for such a Resolution. Sin is such a thing, that there can be no better Argument to make Men resolve against it, than

to consider what it is, and to think seriously of the Nature and Consequence of it. And God and Goodness are so amiable and desirable, that the very proposal of these Objects hath invitations and allurements enough to inflame our desires after them, and to make us rush into the embraces of them. If we would but enter into the serious Consideration of them, we should soon be resolved in our Minds about them.

Do but consider a little what Sin is. It is the shame and blemish of thy Nature, the reproach and disgrace of thy Understanding and Reason, the great deformity and disease of thy Soul, and the eternal Enemy of thy Rest and Peace. It is thy Shackles and thy Fetters, the Tyrant that oppresses thee and restrains thee of thy Liberty, and condemns thee to the basest Slavery and the vilest Drudgery. It is the unnatural and violent state of thy Soul, the *Worm* that perpetually gnaws thy Conscience, the cause of all thy Fears and Troubles, and of all the Evils and Miseries, all the Mischiefs and Disorders that are in the World; it is the Foundation and Fewel of Hell; it is that which puts thee out of the Possession and Enjoyment of thy self, which doth alienate and separate thee from God the Fountain of Bliss and Happiness, which provokes him to be thine Enemy, and lays thee open every moment to the fierce Revenge of his Justice, and if thou dost persist and continue in it, will finally sink and oppress thee under the insupportable weight of his Wrath, and make thee so weary of thy self, that thou shalt wish a thousand times that thou hadst never been; and will render thee so perfectly miserable, that thou wouldest esteem it a great Happiness to exchange thy Condition with the most wretched and forlorn Person that ever lived upon Earth, to be perpetually upon a Rack, and to lie down for ever under the rage of all the most violent Diseases and Pains that ever afflicted Mankind. Sin is all this which I have described, and will certainly bring upon thee all those Evils and Mischiefs which I have mentioned, and make thee far more miserable than I am able to express, or thou to conceive. And art thou not yet resolved to leave it? Shall I need to use any other Arguments to set thee against it, and take thee off from the Love and Practice of it, than this Representation which I have now made of the horrible Nature and Consequences of it?

And then consider on the other hand, what it is that I am persuading thee to turn to; to thy God and Duty. And would not this be a blessed change indeed! To leave the greatest Evil, and to turn to the chief Good! For this Resolution of returning to God, is nothing else but a Resolution to be wise and happy, and to put thy self into the Possession of that which is a greater Good, if it is possible, than Sin is an Evil, and will render thee more happy than Sin can make thee miserable. Didst thou but think what God is, and what he will be to thee if thou wilt return to him, how kindly he will receive thee after thy all wandrings from him *days without number*, thou wouldest soon take up the Resolution of the Prodigal, and say, *I will arise and go to my Father*.

And consider likewise what it is to return to thy Duty. It is nothing else but to do what becomes thee, and what is suitable to the Original Frame of thy Nature, and to the truest dictates of thy Reason and Conscience, and what is not more thy Duty, than it is thy Interest and thy Happiness. For that which God requires of us, is to be righteous and holy, and good, that is, to be like God himself, who is the Pattern of all Perfection and Happiness. It is to have our Lives conformed to his Will, which is always perfect Holiness and Goodness, a state of Peace and Tranquillity, and the very temper and disposition of Happiness. It is that which is a principal and most essential Ingredient into the Felicity of the Divine Nature, and without which God would not be what he is, but a deformed and imperfect and miserable Being.

And if this be a true Representation which I have made to you, of Sin and Vice on the one hand, and of God and Goodness on the other, what can be more powerful than the serious Consideration of it to engage us to a speedy Resolution of leaving our Sins, and of *turning and cleaving to the Lord with full purpose of heart*? After this we cannot but conclude with the Penitent in the Text; *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more: That which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

3. Consider how unreasonable it is to be unresolved in a Case of so great moment and concernment. There is no greater Argument of a Man's weakness, than Irresolution in matters of mighty consequence, when both the Importance of the thing, and Exigency of present Circumstances require a speedy Resolution. We should account it a strange folly, for a Man to be unresolved in the clearest and plainest matters that concern his temporal welfare and safety. If a Man could not determine himself whether he should eat or starve; if he were dangerously sick, and could not determine whether he should take Physick or Die; or if one that were in Prison, could not resolve himself whether he should accept of Liberty; and be content to be released; or if a fair Estate were offer'd to him, he should desire seven years time to consider whether he should take it or not: this would be so absurd in the common Affairs of Life, that a Man would be thought infatuated, that should be doubtful and unresolved in cases so plain, and of such pressing concernment. If a Man were under the Sentence and Condemnation of the Law, and liable to be executed upon the least intimation of the Prince's Pleasure, and a Pardon were graciously offer'd to him, with this intimation, that this would probably be the last offer of Mercy that ever would be made to him; one would think that in this Case a Man should soon be determined what to do, or rather that he should not need to deliberate at all about it; because there is no danger of rashness in making haste to save his Life.

And yet the Case of a Sinner is of far greater importance, and much more depends upon it, infinitely more than any temporal Concernment whatsoever can amount to, even our Happiness or Misery to all Eternity. And can there be any difficulty for a Man to be resolved what is to be done in such a Case? No Case surely in the World can be plainer than this; Whether a Man should leave his Sins, and return to God and his Duty, or not; that is, whether a Man should choose to be happy or miserable, unspeakably and everlastingly happy, or extremely and eternally miserable.

And the Circumstances and Exigences of our Case do call for a speedy and peremptory Resolution in this matter. The Sentence of the Law is already past; and God may execute it upon thee every moment, and it is great Mercy and Forbearance not to do it. Thy Life is uncertain, and thou art liable every minute to be snatch'd away and hurried out of this World. However at the best, thou hast but a little time to resolve in; Death and Judgment and Eternity cannot be far off, and for ought thou knowest they may be even at the door. Thou art upon the matter just ready to be seiz'd upon by Death, to be summon'd to Judgment, and to be swallow'd up of Eternity: And is it not yet time thinkest thou, to resolve? Wouldst thou have yet a little longer time to deliberate, whether thou shouldst repent and forsake thy Sins, or not? If there were difficulty in the Case, or if there were no danger in the delay? if thou couldst gain time, or any thing else, by suspending thy Resolution, there were then some Reason why thou shouldst not make a sudden Determination. But thou canst pretend none of these. It is evident at first sight, what is best to be done, and nothing can make it plainer. It is not a matter so clear and out of the Controversy, that Riches are better than Poverty, and Ease better than Pain, and Life more desirable than Death; as it is, that it is better to break off our Sins, than to continue in the practice of them; to be reconciled to God, than to go on to provoke him; to be Holy and Virtuous, than to be Wicked and Vicious; to be *Heirs of eternal Glory*, than to be *Vessels of Wrath fitted for Destruction*.

And there is infinite danger in these delays. For if thy Soul be any thing to thee, thou ventur'st that; if thou hast any tenderness and regard for thy eternal Interest, thou runnest the hazard of that; if Heaven and Hell be any thing to thee, thou incurrest the danger of losing one, and falling into the other.

And thou gainest nothing by continuing unresolved. If Death and Judgment would tarry thy leisure, and wait till thou hadst brought thy thoughts to some issue, and were resolved what to do, it were something: But thy Irresolution in this matter will be so far from keeping back Death and Judgment, that it will both hasten and aggravate them, both make them to come the sooner, and to be the heavier when they come; because thou abusest the Goodness of God, and *despisest his patience and long-suffering, which should lead thee and draw thee on to Repentance,*

tance, and not keep thee back. Hereby thou encouragest thy self in thy lewd and riotous Courses, and, because *thy Lord delayeth his coming*, art the more negligent and extravagant. Hear what doom our Lord pronounceth upon such *slothful and wicked servant*, Luke xii. 46. *The Lord of that Servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.* None so like to be surprized and to be severely handled by the Justice of God, as those that trifle with his Patience.

4. Consider how much Resolution would tend to the settling of our Minds, and making our Lives comfortable. There is nothing that perplexeth and disquieteth a Man more, than to be unresolved in the great and important Concernments of his Life. What anxiety and confusion is there in our Spirits, whilst we are doubtful and undetermined about such matters? How are we divided and distracted, when our Reason and Judgment direct us one way, and our Lusts and Affections bias us to the contrary? When we are convinced and satisfied what is best for us, and yet are disaffected to our own Interest. Such a Man is all the while self-condemned, and acts with the perpetual regret of his Reason and Conscience; and whenever he reflects upon himself, he is offended and angry with himself, his Life and all his Actions are uneasy and displeasing to him; and there is no way for this Man to be at peace, but to put an end to this conflict one way or other, either by conquering his Reason or his Will. The former is very difficult, nothing being harder than for a Sinner to lay his Conscience asleep, after it is once thoroughly awaken'd; he may charm it for a while, but every little occasion will rouse it again, and renew his Trouble; so that though a Man may have some Truce with his Conscience, yet he can never come to a firm and settled Peace this way; but if by a vigorous Resolution a Man would but conquer his Will, his Mind would be at rest, and there would be a present calm in his Spirit. And why should we be such Enemies to our own Peace, and to the Comfort and Contentment of our Lives, as not to take this course, and thereby rid our selves at once of that which really, and at the bottom, is the ground of all the trouble and disquiet of our Lives?

S E R M O N CXV.

The Nature and Necessity of holy Resolution.

J O B XXXIV. 31, 32.

*The third
Sermon on
this Text.*

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more; that which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done Iniquity, I will do no more.

TH E S E words are a Description of the temper and behaviour of a true Penitent, his Confession of Sins, and Resolution of Amendment. Concerning Resolution I have shewn what it is in general: What is the special Object or Matter of this kind of Resolution: What is implied in a sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins and returning to God and our Duty: That in this Resolution the very Essence and formal Nature of Repentance doth consist: And have offer'd some Considerations, to convince Men of the necessity and fitness of this Resolution, and to keep them stedfast to it. As,

1. That this Resolution is nothing but what under the influence of God's Grace is in our Power.

2. The things themselves, which we are to resolve upon, are the strongest Arguments that can be for such a Resolution.

3. How unreasonable it is for Men to be unresolved in a Case of so great moment.

4. How

4. How much this Resolution will tend to the settling of our Minds; and making our Lives comfortable. I proceed to the Considerations which remain.

5. Then be pleased to consider, that a strong and vigorous Resolution would make the whole Work of Religion easy to us; it would conquer all difficulties which attend a Holy and Religious Course of Life, especially at our first entrance into it: Because Resolution brings our Minds to a Point, and unites all the strength and force of our Souls in one great Design, and makes us vigorous and firm; courageous and constant in the Prosecution of it; and without this it is impossible to hold out long, and to resist the strong Propensions and Inclinations of our corrupt Nature; which, if we be not firmly resolved, will return, and by degrees gain upon us; it will be impossible to break through Temptations, and to gainsay the importunity of them: when the Devil and the World solicit us; we shall not be able to say them nay, but shall be apt to yield to them.

There are many who have had faint wishes and cold desires, and half Purposes of leading a new and better Life: But having not taken up a firm Resolution in the Case, having not determined themselves by a severe purpose, a little thing sways them; and brings them back to their former Course; 'tis no hard matter to divert them and engage them another way; they are *shaken with every wind* of Temptation, every little blast of Opposition and Persecution turns them back, and carries them to the ways of Sin: whereas Resolution fixeth a Man's Spirit, and makes it most stedfast and unmovable; and sets him upon a *Rock*, which, *when the winds blow, and the rain falls, and the floods come*, abides firm against all impressions.

If I would give the most probable and useful advice to engage and continue a Man in a good Course, I would commend to him a deliberate and firm Resolution. *David* proved this way with very happy success, *Psal. cxix. 106. I have sworn* (says he) *and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous Judgments.* This was a security to him against all assaults, and nothing could turn him from his Course afterwards; not the dangers he was exposed to, v. 109. *My Soul is continually in my Hand, yet do I not forget thy Law*; not the snares of wicked Men that were laid for him, v. 110. *The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I erred not from thy precepts.* By virtue of this Resolution he could rise up in defiance of all those that would have tempted him to any sinful action, v. 115. *Depart from me ye evil-doers, for I will keep the Commandments of my God.*

When a Man is thus resolved upon a holy Course, he is not easily diverted from it, and is able to resist the importunity and flattery of Temptations, and to say to them, as Men are wont to do, when they are fully and firmly resolved upon any thing; *Let me alone, I am not to be moved, it is in vain to urge me, I am resolved to the contrary.* Thus stiff and resolute Men can be in other Cases, where there is not near that Cause and Reason for it: and if we would but take up a generous Resolution to break off our Sins, and to live better Lives, this would be the way to conquer that listlessness and unwillingness which hinders us from engaging in a good Course, and is the cause of so many lame excuses and unreasonable delays. It is the want of Resolution, and the weakness of our Resolutions, which is the true Reason why we are not more equal and constant and uniform in the ways of Religion; but are religious only by fits and starts; in a heat, and during some present Trouble and Conviction of Mind. *The double-minded Man is unstable*, says St. James, *in all his ways.* When a Man is of several Minds, he is easily moved one way or other.

6. And lastly, Consider the infinite danger of remaining unresolved. *The evil day may overtake you*, while you are deliberating whether you should avoid it or not. A state of Sin is liable to so many hazards, hath so many dangers continually threatening it, and hanging over it, that it is the most imprudent thing in the World to linger in it. It is like *Lot's* staying in *Sodom* when the Lord was going to destroy it, when Fire and Brimstone were just ready to be rained down from Heaven upon it. Whilst Men are lingering in a sinful state, if *the Lord be not merciful to them*, they will be consumed. Therefore it concerns thee, Sinner, to determine thy self speedily, and to make haste out of this dangerous Condition, *to escape for thy Life, lest some evil overtake thee*, and lest Death finding thee unresolved, determine thy case for thee, and put it out of all doubt, and past all remedy.

How many have been cut off in their Irresolution? And because they would not determine what to do, God hath concluded their case for them, and *sworn in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest*. It may be thou promisest thy self the space of many years to resolve in: *Thou fool, this Night thy Soul may be required of thee*, and whilst thou art unresolved what to do, God is resolving what to do with thee, and putting a period to his Patience and long expectation of thy Repentance: and thou knowest not how soon God may do this, and make an immutable Determination concerning thee. And wo unto thee, when God hath resolved thus.

Suppose thou shouldst be snatched out of the World, and hurried before the dreadful Tribunal of God, in this doubtful and unresolved state. And this is possible enough; because thou hast no certain tenure of thy Life, thou art at no time secured from the stroke of Death: Nay, it is probable enough, because thou art every moment liable to ten thousand accidents, any one of which may snap in sunder the thread of thy Life. And suppose this should happen to thee, what dost thou imagine would become of thee? Wouldst not thou then wish a thousand times, that thou hadst resolved in time? How glad wouldst thou then be, that it were possible for thee to retrieve and call back but *one* of those *days without number*, which thou hast so vainly trifled away, that thou mightest resolve upon *the things of thy Peace!* but *thou wouldst not do it in that thy day*, which God afforded thee to this purpose; thou hast let the opportunity slip out of thy hands, and it will never be in thy power again, but *the things of thy peace will be for ever hid from thine Eyes*.

Why wilt thou then be so foolish, as to run thy self upon the evident hazard of losing Heaven, and being miserable for ever? Why wilt thou make work for a sadder and longer Repentance, than that which thou dost now so carefully decline? This was the case of *the foolish Virgins* in the Parable, *Matth. xxv.* who made account to be ready to meet the Bridegroom at his coming, but took no care in time to get *Oil into their Lamps*. They thought the Bridegroom would *tarry yet a while longer*, and therefore *they slumber'd and slept*, in great security: but at *midnight*, when *the cry was made*, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh*; then they *arose*, and in a great hurry and confusion went about *trimming their Lamps*; they were resolved then, they would have begged or bought Oil; and would have been at any pains or cost for it: but then it was too late; for *the door was suddenly shut* against them, and no importunity could prevail to have it opened to them.

Canst thou be contented to have *the door shut* against thee, and when thou shalt cry, *Lord open unto me*, to have him return this answer, *Depart from me, I know thee not?* If thou canst not, resolve to prevent this in time.

Didst thou but see, and know, and feel what the miserable do in Hell, thou couldst not linger thus, thou couldst not continue so long unresolved. Why the time will come, when thou wilt reflect severely upon thy self, and say, That I should ever be so stupid and sottish, to be unresolved in a matter of such infinite concernment to me! How often was I admonish'd and convinced of the necessity of changing my course? How many inward Motions had I to that purpose? How often did my own Reason and Conscience, and the Holy Spirit of God, by his frequent and friendly suggestions, put me upon this? How often was I just upon the brink of resolving? I resolved to resolve; but still I delayed it 'till Death seized upon me unresolved: and now the opportunity is lost, and never to be recover'd again. I would not in time resolve to be wise and happy; and now by the Sentence of the just and unchangeable God, it is resolved that I must be miserable to all Eternity.

How should these Considerations quicken us, who have yet these opportunities in our hands; which those who neglected and trifled them away, would now purchase at any rate! I say, how should these Considerations which I have proposed, move us to take up a present Resolution in the matter! Consider these things, Sinner, and lay them seriously to Heart, and say to thy self, Fool that I have been, to be unresolved so long; not to determine my self in a matter of such mighty consequence; to continue so long in suspense, whether I had best go to Heaven or Hell, and which was most adviseable, to be happy or miserable for ever! Blessed be God, that hath been pleased to exercise so much Patience and Long-suffering

suffering towards me, that hath spared me so long, when he might have taken me away, and cut me off unresolved. My Soul lies at stake, and for ought I know all Eternity depends upon my present and speedy Resolution. And now by God's Grace I will not delay one moment more, I will hang no longer between Heaven and Hell. I shall now, in the

Second place, offer some Considerations to persuade those that have taken up this good Resolution, to pursue it, and to promote it to Practice and Execution, and to keep firm and stedfast to it. And to this end, be pleased to consider these *three* things:

1. What an Argument it is of vanity and inconstancy, to change this Resolution, whilst the Reason of it stands good, and is not changed. I suppose that thou wert once resolved to leave thy Sins, and to return to God and thy Duty. Why dost thou not pursue this Resolution? Why dost thou not persist in it? Surely there appeared to thee some Reason why thou didst take it up; and if the Reason remain, and appear still the same to thee that it did, how comes it to pass that thou hast alter'd thy Mind, and changed thy Purpose? Either the Case is the same it was, when thou tookest up this Resolution; or it is not. If it be altered, then thou hast Reason to change thy Resolution: If it be not, thou hast the same Reason to continue in it, that thou hadst to take it up. Shew then, if thou canst, wherein it is changed? Wert thou mistaken before about the Nature of Sin, and the pernicious consequences of it; or about the Nature of God and Goodness? Hast thou any thing now to plead for Sin, which thou didst not know or consider before? Art thou now satisfied that Sin is not so evil and unreasonable a thing, as thou didst once apprehend, or that it does not threaten thee with so much danger as thou didst fear? Hath God altered his Opinion of it, or is he become more favourable to it than he was? Hast thou received any news lately from Heaven by any good hands, that God hath revers'd his Threatenings against Sin, or that he hath adjourn'd the Judgment of the World, *sine die*, without any set time? That he hath set the Devils at Liberty, and releas'd them from their Chains of darkness, and hath quenched and put out the fire of Hell? Or art thou satisfied that there is no such Being as God in the World, or that he is not so good as thou didst apprehend him to be, or that he will not reward those that diligently serve him? Hast thou found upon trial, that Holiness and Virtue are but empty Names, and there is nothing in them? That there is not that Pleasure and Peace in keeping the Commandments of God which thou wert told of? I am sure thou canst not with Reason pretend any thing of all this. Thy Reason and Conscience and Experience cannot speak one word on the behalf of Sin, or give any Testimony against God and his holy ways. And if the Case be the same it was, nothing but thine own vanity and fickleness, or some worse Reason, could move thee to alter thy purpose.

2. Let it be farther consider'd, That if we be not constant to our Resolution, all we have done is lost. If thou repentest of thy Repentance, it will not prove a *Repentance to Salvation*. As good to have stay'd in *Sodom*, as to look back after thou art come out of it. Thus God tells us by the Prophet, *Ezek. xxxiii. 12, 13. Therefore thou Son of Man, say unto the children of thy People, the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: neither shall the righteous be able to live in the day that he sinneth. When I say to the righteous, He shall surely live: if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remember'd: but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.* So that whatever we have done in the Work of Repentance, what Resolutions forever we have taken up; if afterwards we give over and let them fall, all that we have done is lost, and will come to nothing.

3. Let us consider in the last place, that if we be not constant to our Resolution, we shall not only lose all that we have done, but we shall thereby render our Condition much worse. Remember *Lot's Wife*, who, after she was escaped out of *Sodom*, look'd back, and was made a particular and lasting Monument of God's wrath and displeasure; which seems to be meant by that expression of her being *turned into a Pillar of Salt*, that is, a *lasting Monument*, *Prov. xiv. 14. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. Shall be filled with his own ways;* this expression doth signify a most heavy and dreadful curse upon those who fall

off from their good Purpose and Resolution, that they shall have Sorrow and Trouble enough upon it. For so likewise, *Prov. i. 26, 27.* where God threatens wilful and obstinate Sinners with the heaviest Judgments, that he would *laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear comes, when their fear comes as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind, and fear and anguish cometh upon them;* he adds, as the sum of all other Judgments, that *they shall eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices.* *Heb. x. 38.* But if any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no pleasure in him; which words are a *μείωσις*, and signify a great deal more than seems to be express'd. My Soul shall have no pleasure in him; that is, let such an one expect the effects of God's firecest wrath and displeasure. For so the *Hebrews* are wont to express things that are great and unspeakable, when they cannot sufficiently set them forth; by saying less, they say more. So *Psal. v. 4.* where it is said, *Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness,* the *Psalmist* means, and would have us to understand it so, that God is so far from taking any Pleasure in the Sins of Men, that he bears the most violent hatred and displeasure against them. So when the Apostle here says, *If any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no pleasure in him,* he means that it is not to be express'd how God will deal with such Persons, and how severely his Justice will handle them. To the same purpose is that Declaration, *2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.* *For if after they have escaped the Pollutions of the World, through the knowledge of the Lord, and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them, not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them.* The condition of all impenitent Sinners is very sad; but of Apostates much worse: not only because the Sins which they commit afterwards are much greater, receiving a new aggravation, which the Sins of those who are simply impenitent are not capable of; but likewise because such Persons are usually more wicked afterwards. For they that break loose from severe Purposes and Resolutions of a better Course, do by this very thing in a great measure fear and conquer their Consciences, and then no wonder if afterwards *they give up themselves to commit all iniquity with greediness.* When after long abstinence Men return to Sin again, their Lusts are more fierce and violent; like a Man who, after long fasting, returns to his Meat with a more raging appetite. This our Saviour sets forth to us in the Parable of the unclean Spirit's returning again and taking possession of the Man, after he had left him, *Matth. xii. 43, 44, 45.* *When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a Man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my House from whence I came out: And when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnish'd. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other Spirits more wicked than himself; and the end of that Man is worse than his beginning.* The Moral of which is, that when a Man hath once left his Sins, if afterward he entertain thoughts of returning to them again, Sin will return upon him with redoubled force and strength, and his Heart will be so much the more prepared and disposed for the entertaining of more and greater Vices; and his leaving his Sins for a time, will be but like a running back, that he may leap with greater violence into Hell and Destruction.

Besides, that such Persons do the greatest injury to God and the holy ways of Religion that can be, by forsaking them after they have owned and approved them. For it will not be so much regarded, what wicked Men, who have always been so, talk against God and Religion; because they do not talk from Experience, but *speakevil of the things which they know not:* Whereas those who forsake the ways of Religion after they have once engaged in them, do disparage Religion more effectually, and reproach it with greater Advantage: because they pretend to speak from the Experience they have had of it, they have tried both the ways of Sin, and the ways of Religion, and after Experience of both, they return to Sin again: Which, what is it but to proclaim to the World, that the ways of Sin and Vice are rather to be chosen than the ways of Holiness and Virtue; that the Devil is a better Master than God, and that a sinful and wicked Life yields more Pleasure and greater Advantages, than are to be had in keeping the Commandments of God? And this must needs be a high Provocation, and a hea-

vy Aggravation of our Ruin. Let these Considerations prevail with us to pursue his holy Resolution, after we have taken it up, and to persist in it. There remains only the

VI. And *last* particular which I proposed to be spoken to, viz. To add some directions for the maintaining and making good of this Resolution of Repentance and Amendment; and they shall be these *three*.

1. Let us do all in the strength of God, considering our necessary and essential dependance upon him, and that *without him* and the assistance of his Grace, *we can do nothing*. *We are not* (as the Apostle tells us) *sufficient of our selves, as of our selves*; that is, without the assistance of God's holy Spirit, *to think any thing that is good*: much less to resolve upon it. *It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*; that is, of his own goodness, as the same Apostle speaks, *Phil. ii. 13*. It is God that upholds us in being, and from whom we have all our Power as to natural Actions; but as to spiritual things, considering the great Corruption and Depravation of Human Nature, we stand in need of a more especial and immediate assistance.

If we know any thing of our selves, we cannot but know what foolish and ignorant Creatures we are, how weak and impotent, how averse and opposite to any thing that is good, And therefore it is wise counsel in all Cases, but chiefly in spiritual matters, which Solomon gives, *Prov. iij. 5, 6. Trust in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not to thy own understanding. Acknowledge him in all thy ways: and he shall direct thy steps*. Let us then address our selves to God, in the words of the holy Prophet, *Jer. x. 23. O Lord, I know that the way of Man is not in himself, and that it is not in Man that walketh to direct his steps*. And let us beg of him, that he would consider our case, commiserate our weakness, and pity our impotency, and that he would join his strength to us, and grant us the assistance of his Grace and holy Spirit, to put us upon sincere Resolutions of a new Life, and to keep us constant and stedfast to them; *to open the Eyes of our Minds, and to turn us from darkness to light, and from the Power of Satan and our Lusts unto God; that we may repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance, that so we may receive forgiveness of Sins, and an Inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in Christ*.

And for our Encouragement in this matter, God hath bid us to apply our selves to him; and he hath promised not to be wanting to us, in words as express and universal as can well be devised. *Jam. i. 5, 6. If any Man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth no Man; but let him ask in Faith, nothing wavering*, that is, not doubting but that God is both able and willing to give what he asks. And *Luke xi. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a Son should ask bread of any of you that is a Father, will he give him a Stone? Or, if he ask a Fish, will he for a Fish give him a Serpent? Or, if he shall ask an Egg, will he offer him a Scorpion? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your Children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* To encourage our Faith, our Saviour useth such an Argument as may give us the greatest assurance. We are commonly confident, that our earthly Parents will not deny us those things that are good and necessary for us, though they may be otherwise evil: *How much more then shall our heavenly Father, who is essentially and infinitely good, give his holy Spirit to us?* And if this be not enough, St. Matthew useth a larger expression, *How much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?* If there be any thing that is good, and we stand in need of it, and earnestly pray to God for it, we may be confident that he will give it us.

2. We ought to be very watchful over our selves, considering our weakness and wavering, and instability and fickleness, the treachery and deceitfulness of our own Hearts, and the malice of Satan. It will be a great while before the Habits of Sin be so weaken'd and subdued, as that we shall have no Propension to return to them again; so that our Hearts will be often endeavouring to return to their former posture, and, *like a deceitful Bow, which is not firmly strung, to start back*. And besides the deceitfulness of Sin and our own Hearts, the Devil is very malicious,

ous, and his malice will make him vigilant to watch all Advantages against us; and his great design will be to shake our Resolution; for if that stand, he knows his Kingdom will fall, and therefore he raiseth all his Batteries against this Fort, and labours by all means to undermine it; and nothing will be matter of greater Triumph to him, than to gain a Person that was revolted from him, and resolved to leave his Service. If therefore thou expectest God's Grace and Assistance to keep thee stedfast to thy Resolution, do not neglect thy self, but *keep thy Heart with all diligence*, and watch carefully over thy self: for because *God worketh in us both to will and to do*, therefore he expects that *we should work out our Salvation with fear and trembling*, lest by our own carelessness and neglect we should miscarry.

3. Let us frequently renew and reinforce our Resolutions, more especially when we think of coming to the Sacrament, and approaching the holy Table of the Lord. Nothing is more apt to beget in us good Resolutions, and to strengthen them, than to consider the dreadful Sufferings of the Son of God for our Sins, which are so lively set forth and represented to us in this holy Sacrament, which as it is on God's part a Seal and Confirmation of his Grace and Love to us, so on our part it ought to be a solemn Ratification of our Covenant with God, *to depart from iniquity, and to walk before him in Holiness and Righteousness all the days of our Lives.*

S E R M O N CXVI.

The Nature and Necessity of Restitution.

LUKE XIX. 8, 9.

*The first
Sermon on
this Text.*

And if I have taken any thing from any Man by false Accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is Salvation come to this House.

ONE particular and eminent Fruit of true Repentance, is the making of Restitution and Satisfaction to those whom we have injur'd. As for God, we can make no Satisfaction and Compensation to him, for the Injuries we have done him by our Sins; all that we can do in respect of God, is to confess our Sins to him, to make acknowledgment of our Miscarriages, to be heartily troubled for what we have done, and not to do the like for the future. But for Injuries done to Men, we may in many cases make Reparation and Satisfaction. And this, as it is one of the best signs and evidences of a true Repentance; so it is one of the most proper and genuine effects of it: For this is as much as in us lies, to undo what we have done, and to unfin our Sins.

But, because the practice of this Duty doth so interfere with the Interest of Men, and consequently it will be very difficult to convince Men of their Duty in this particular, and to persuade them to it; therefore I design to handle this particular Fruit and Effect of a true Repentance by it self, from these words which contain in them,

I. The Fruit and Effect of *Zaccheus* his Conversion and Repentance; *If I have taken any thing from any Man, I restore him fourfold.*

II. The Declaration which our Saviour makes hereupon, of the truth of his Repentance and Conversion, and the happy state he was thereby put into. *And Jesus said unto him, This day is Salvation come to this House, for as much as he also is the Son of Abraham;* as if he had said, By these Fruits and Effects it appears, that this is a Repentance to Salvation; and this Man whom you look upon as a Sinner and a Heathen, may, by better right, call *Abraham Father*, than any of you formal *Pharisees* and *Jews*, who glory so much in being the *children of Abraham.*

I. The

I. The Fruit and Effect of *Zaccheus's* Conversion and Repentance; and *If*, &c.

This *Zaccheus*, as you find at the 2d. Verse, was Chief of the Publicans, which was an Office of great Odium and Infamy among the *Jews*, they being the Collectors of the Tribute which the *Roman* Emperor, under whose Power the *Jews* then were, did exact from them. And because these Publicans farmed this Tribute of the Emperor at a certain Rent, they made a gain out of it to themselves, by exacting and requiring more of the People than was due upon that account; so that their Calling was very infamous upon three accounts.

1. Because they were the Instruments of oppressing their Countrymen; for so they looked upon the Tax they paid to the *Romans*, as a great oppression.

2. Because they were forced by the Necessity of their Calling to have familiar Conversation with Heathens, whom they look'd upon as Sinners. Hence the Phrase used by the Apostle, of *Sinners of the Gentiles*. And hence likewise probably it is, that *Publicans and Sinners*, *Publicans and Heathens*, are joined several times together, because of the occasions of frequent Converse which the Publicans had with Heathens.

3. But principally they were odious because of the common injustice and oppression which they used in the management of their Calling, by fraud and violence extorting more than was due, to enhance the profit of their Places. Hence it is, that this sort of Officers have been generally branded, and reckoned among the worst sort of Men. So he in the Comedy, πάντες τελώναι, τάντες εἰσὶν ἄρπαγες, all Publicans are Rapacious or Robbers. And this is most probably the Sin which *Zaccheus* here repents of, and in regard to which he promises Restitution; καὶ εἴ τί τι ἐσυκοφάνησα, And if I have taken any thing from any Man by false accusation; so we render the words in our Translation: but the word ἐσυκοφάνησα signifies more generally, If I have been injurious to any one, if I have wronged any Man, as appears by the constant use of this word by the LXX, who by this word do translate the most general Hebrew words, which signify any kind of Injury or Oppression, either by fraud, or violence, or calumny. So that there is no reason here to restrain it, wronging Men by false accusation: for *Zaccheus* his Sin being in all probability extorting more than was due, this might as easily be done many other ways, as by false accusation. And that this was the common Sin of the Publicans, appears by the Counsel which *John* the Baptist gives them, *Luke* iii. 12, 13. Then came also the Publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you; that is, do not by fraud or violence extort from any Man any more than the Tribute which is laid upon him.

So that *Zaccheus* here promiseth, that if he had been injurious to any Man in his Office, by extorting more than was due, he would restore to him fourfold. And if *Zaccheus* calculated his Estate right, and intended to reserve any part of it to himself, which is but reasonable to suppose, it could be no very great part of his Estate which was so injuriously got: and I am afraid a far smaller proportion than many are guilty of, who yet pass for very honest Men in comparison of the Publicans. The Text saith, he was a rich Man. Suppose he was worth ten or twelve thousand Pounds; half he gives to the Poor, that was well got, or else his whole Estate could not have made a fourfold Restitution for it. Suppose he reserved a thousand or two to himself; then, at the rate of restoring fourfold, not above a thousand can be injuriously got, that is about a Penny in the Shilling. I am afraid that now a-days there are few such moderate Oppressors: Nay, it is possible that the proportion of his Estate injuriously got might be much less; more it could not easily be. But whatever it was, he does not plead that by way of excuse for himself; he freely confesseth he had sinned in this kind, and offers Restitution to the utmost, much more than the Law did require in such Cases.

II. You have the Declaration our Saviour makes hereupon, of the truth of his Repentance and Conversion, and the happy state he was thereby put into, *This day is Salvation come to this House*.

The Observation I shall make from hence is this, that Restitution and Satisfaction for the Injuries we have done to others, is a proper and genuine Effect of true Repentance. I know the Text only speaks of Restitution in case of Oppression and Exaction: But because there is the same Reason why Restitution should

be

be made for all other Injuries, I think I may without any force or violence to my Text, very well make it the Foundation of a more general Discourse concerning Restitution.

In handling of this, I shall,

First, Open to you the Nature of this Duty.

Secondly, Confirm the truth of the Proposition, by shewing the Necessity of it.

Thirdly, Endeavour to persuade Men to the discharge of this necessary Duty.

First, For the opening the Nature of this Duty, I will consider,

I. The Act.

II. The Latitude or Extent of the Object, as I may call it, or the matter about which it is conversant,

III. The manner how it is to be done.

IV. The Measure of it.

V. The Persons who are bound to make Restitution, and to whom it is to be made.

VI. The Time in which it is to be done.

VII. The Order of doing it, where more are injur'd, and Restitution cannot be made at once to all.

I. For the Act. Restitution is nothing else but the making Reparation or Satisfaction to another for the Injuries we have done him. It is to restore a Man to the good Condition from which, contrary to Right, and to our Duty, we have removed him. Restitution is only done in Case of Injury. Another Man may be damaged and prejudiced by us many ways, and we not be bound to make Restitution; because there are many Cases wherein a Man deserves the prejudice we do to him: As when we are Instruments of inflicting upon a Man the Punishment which the Law doth sentence him to. And there are many Cases wherein we may be prejudicial to others, and cannot help it. As a Man that is sick of a contagious Disease, may infect others that are about him: But he is not injurious to them; because it is not his fault but his infelicity.

II. For the Latitude and Extent of the Object, as I may call it, or the matter about which it is conversant. It extends to all kind of Injuries, which may be reduced to these *two* Heads; either we injure a Person with or without his consent.

1. Some Injuries are done to Persons with their Consent. Such are most of those Injuries which are done to the Souls of Men, when we command, or counsel, or encourage them to sin, or draw them in by our Example. For the Maxim, *Volenti non fit injuria*, *There's no injury done to a Man that is willing*, is not so to be understood, as that a Man may not in some sort consent to his own wrong: for absolute freedom and willingness supposeth that a Man is wholly left to himself, and that he understands fully what he does. And in this Sense no Man sins willingly, that is, perfectly knowing and actually considering what he does; and Commands and Persuasion, and Example, are a kind of Violence; yet none of these hinder, but that a Man in these Cases may sufficiently consent to what he does. But yet he is not so perfectly free, as to excuse him that draws him into Sin by these ways. So likewise when a Man refuseth to do that which is his Duty without a Reward; for instance, to do Justice to another; he is injurious in so doing: but yet not altogether without the consent of him whom he injures.

2. Injuries are done to Persons without their consent. And these, though they are not always the greatest Mischiefs, yet they are the greatest Injuries. And these Injuries are done either by fraud and cunning, or by violence and oppression; either by over-reaching another Man in Wit, or over-bearing him by Power. And these usually either respect the Bodies of Men, or their Estates, or their good Name. The Bodies of Men. He that maims another, or does him any other Injury in his Limbs or Health, either by fraud or force, is bound, so far as he is able, to make Reparation for the Injury. Or they respect the Estates of Men. If by cunning, or by violence, or by false Testimony or Accusation, thou hast hinder'd a Man of any Benefit, which otherwise would have come to him, thou art bound to Restitution. If by thy Power or Interest, by thy knowledge in the Law, or skill in Business, thou hast directly and avowedly helped and assisted another to do Injustice to his Neighbour, thou art bound to Restitution; though not as the principal, yet as the accessory. If thou hast over-reached thy Brother in any Con-

tract,

tract, making Advantage of his ignorance or unskilfulness; if thou hast made a gain of his Necessity; if thou hast by thy Power and Interest, or by any more violent and forcible way detained his Right, or taken away that which was his, thou art bound to make Reparation for these Injuries, to restore that which thou hast borrowed, to return the pledge which thou hast wrongfully kept, to release unconscionable Forfeitures, to pay Debts, to make satisfaction for Frauds and Cheats, to take off all unjust invasions and surprizals of Estates: yea, tho' the fraud be such that thou art not liable to make satisfaction by any Human Law, yet thou art as much bound to it in Conscience to God and thy Duty, as if thou hadst stolen or taken it by violence from thy Neighbour. For in truth and reality, Fraud is as great an Injury as Violence, altho' Human Laws cannot take cognizance of it, so as to relieve every Man that is over-reach'd in a Bargain: Nay, of the two it is worse; for whenever thou deceivest a Man in this kind, thou dost not only wrong him in point of Estate, but thou abusest his Understanding.

And so likewise in respect of a Man's Fame and Reputation. If thou hast hurt any Man's good Name by slander or calumny, by false witness, by rendring him ridiculous, or any other way, thou art bound to give such Satisfaction as the thing is capable of; or if there be any other Injury which I have not mentioned, thou art obliged to make Reparation for it.

III. As to the manner how Restitution is to be made.

1. Thou art bound to do it voluntarily, and of thy own accord, though the Person injured do not know who it was that did him the Injury, though he do not seek Reparation by Law. When a Man is forced by Law to make Restitution, it is not a Virtue, but Necessity; this is not a Fruit of Repentance and a good Mind, but of good Law. And that thou dost not do it, unless the Law compel thee to it, is an Argument thou wouldst not have done it, if thou couldst have avoided it. And though the thing be done, yet *thou* hast not done it, but *the Law*; and unless thou heartily repent of thy Crime, the Injury still lies at thy Door, and in God's account thou art as guilty as if no Restitution had been made. Not that thou art bound in this Case to make new Restitution over again; but thou art bound to bewail thy Neglect, that thou didst not do it voluntarily and without the compulsion of the Law.

2. Thou must do it in kind, if the thing be capable of it, and the injur'd Party demand it. Thou must restore the very thing which thou hadst deprived thy Neighbour of, if it be such a thing as can be restored, and be still in thy Power, unless he voluntarily accept of some other thing in exchange.

3. If thou canst not restore it in kind, thou art bound to restore it in value, in something that is as good. As for spiritual Injuries done to the Souls of Men, we are bound to make such Reparation and Compensation as we can. Those whom we have drawn into Sin, and engaged in wicked Courses, by our influence and example, or by neglect of our Duty towards them, we are so far as becomes the Relation we stand in to them, to make acknowledgment of our fault, to endeavour by our Instruction and Counsel to reclaim them from those Sins we led them into, and to *recover them out of the snare of the Devil*; and should never be at rest till we have done as much or more for the furtherance of their Salvation, and helping them forwards towards Heaven, as we did contribute before to their Ruin and Destruction. If we have violated any one's Chastity, we are bound to Marry them, if it was done upon that Condition, and if they require it; thou art bound to keep and maintain those Children which are the Fruit of thy Lust, and to make Reparation to the Person whom thou hast injured, by Dowry or otherwise.

If thou hast defrauded and injured any Man in his good Name, thou art obliged to make him a Compensation by acknowledgment of thy fault, by a studious vindication of him, and by doing him honour, and repairing his Credit in all fitting ways. And if the Injury be irreparable (as it frequently happens, that we can hardly so effectually vindicate a Man, as we can defame him; and it is seldom seen that those wounds which are given to Mens Reputation are perfectly healed,) I say, if the Injury be irreparable, especially if it prove really prejudicial to a Man in his Calling and Civil Interest; if no other Satisfaction will be accepted, it is to be made in Money, which, *Solomon* says, *answers all things*; and the rather, because the Reason and Equity of human Laws hath thought fit to assign this way

of Satisfaction in many Cases upon Actions of Scandal and Defamation. And whatever the Law would give, in any Case, if it could be proved, that is the least we are bound in Conscience to do, when we are guilty to our selves, though the Law cannot take hold of us.

So likewise, if thou hast wounded a Man, thou art bound to pay the Cure, to repair to him and his Relations the Disability for his Calling, and his Way of Livelihood and Subsistence, which he hath contracted by thy Injury. And so for false Imprisonment, the real Detriment which comes to him by it, is to be made amends for: and so in all other Cases, the injured Person is so far as is possible to be restored to the good Condition in which he was before the Injury.

IV. As to the Measure and Proportion of the Restitution we are to make. *Zaccheus* here offers *fourfold*, which was much beyond what any Law required in like Cases. The Measure of Restitution by the Judicial Law of the *Jews*, did very much vary according to the kind and degree of the Injury. In some Cases a Man was only bound to simple Restitution; but then he was to do it to the full, *Exod. xxii. 5, 6.* And so if that which is another Man's be delivered unto his Neighbour to keep, and be stolen from him, he is to make Restitution thereof, *v. 12.* And so if a Man borrow ought of his Neighbour, and it be hurt or die, the owner thereof not being with it, he shall surely make it good, *v. 14.* But for all manner of trespasses by way of theft, whether it be for Ox, for Ass, for Sheep, for Raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, he whom the Judge shall condemn, shall pay double to his Neighbour, *v. 9.* that is, if it be of a living Creature, if the theft be found in his hands alive, whether it be Ox or Ass, or Sheep, he shall restore double, *v. 4.* But if a Man did steal an Ox or a Sheep, and did kill it, or sell it, he was to restore five Oxen, for an Ox, and four Sheep, for a Sheep. And thus we find *David* judged upon *Nathan's* Parable of the Rich Man, who had taken the Poor Man's only Lamb and kill'd and drest it for a Traveller that came to him, *2 Sam. xii. 6.* He shall restore the Lamb fourfold. Now the Reason of this seems to be partly because of the advantage and usefulness of those Creatures above any other; and partly because when they were once kill'd or alienated, a Man could not without great trouble and difficulty make discovery; which hazard of not discovering seems to be accounted for in the Restitution; but if a Man did voluntarily offer Restitution, before he was prosecuted, for any thing that was taken by violence, or unjustly detained from his Neighbour, then he was only to restore the principal, and to add a fifth part thereto, and to offer up an Offering to the Lord, and so his atonement was made, *Levit. vi. 1. &c.*

So that the highest proportion was a fourth or fifth part, and that only in the particular case of Sheep or Oxen stolen away, and kill'd or alienated afterwards. Indeed *Solomon* speaks of a sevenfold Restitution, *Prov. vi. 31.* Where he saith, If a thief be found, he shall restore sevenfold, even all the substance of his House; where seven is only a Number of Perfection, and the meaning is, he shall make perfect and full Restitution according to the Law, so far as his Substance or Estate will reach.

So that it seems *Zaccheus* in restoring fourfold, did out-do the utmost severity of the Law; which in case of Fraud and Oppression was but double, if demanded; if voluntarily offer'd, was the Principal, and a fifth part added; but to testify the truth of his Repentance, and his hearty Sorrow for the injuries he had done, he punisheth himself beyond what the Law would have done.

I do not say that this Example binds as to this measure and Proportion: nay, I do not say we are bound to the proportions of the Law; for that only concerned the Nation of the *Jews*: but altho' we be free from the Letter of the Law, yet we are tyed to the Equity of it. As to the Substance of the Duty of Restitution, we are bound to that by the Law of Nature: As to the Measure and Proportion, the Equity of the Judicial Law in its Proportions, and of *Zaccheus* his Example, ought to be considerable to us.

But to speak more particularly concerning the Measures and Proportions of Restitution, I shall lay down these Propositions.

1. Where Restitution can be made in kind, or the Injury can be certainly valued, we are to restore the thing or the value.

2. We are bound to restore the thing, with the natural increase of it, that is, to satisfy for the loss sustained in the mean time, and the gain hinder'd.

3. Where

3. Where the thing cannot be restored, and the value of it is not certain, we are to give reasonable Satisfaction, that is according to a middle estimation; not the highest, nor the lowest of things of the kind. The injur'd Person can demand no more, and strict Justice requires no more. But it is safe for him that hath done the Injury, rather to exceed than to fall short.

4. We are at least to give by way of Restitution what the Law would give; for that is generally equal, and in most cases rather favourable than rigorous.

5. A Man is not only bound to restitution for the Injury which he did, but for all that directly follows upon his injurious Act, though it were beyond his intention. For the first injury being wilful, thou art presumed to will all that which directly follow'd upon it; according to that Rule, *Involuntarium ortum ex voluntaria censetur pro voluntario*. We are presumed to will that which follows upon a voluntary Action, though we did not intend it. For instance, if a Man maliciously and knowingly set fire upon another Man's House, though he intended only an injury to that particular Person, yet if a wind come and drive the fire to his Neighbours at some distance, though he did not intend this, yet because the first Act was unlawful, he is liable to satisfy for all the direct consequences of it. If a Man wound another without any intention of killing him, and the wound prove mortal, though there was no probability that Death would ensue upon it, the Man is bound, because the first Act was injurious, to make Reparation to his Relations for the damage they sustain by his Death; and if they did depend solely upon him who died by such injury, thou art bound to maintain them.

6. Because those who have lived in a Trade and Course of Injustice, can hardly remember all the particular Injuries they have done, so as to make exact Satisfaction for them, it will not be amiss over and besides to give something to the Poor. So *Zacchæus* does here, *Half of my Estate I give to the Poor, and if I have taken any thing, &c.*

V. The Persons who are concern'd in Restitution. And here I shall consider,

First, The Persons who are bound to make Restitution.

Secondly, The Persons to whom it is to be made.

First, The Persons who are bound to make Restitution. In general, they who have done the injury, or they who come into their stead, so as in Law or Equity the Injury devolves and descends upon them. But for the clearer stating of this, I shall lay down several Propositions which may serve to resolve a great many Cases that may be put concerning Persons obliged to make Restitution.

1. If the Injury be done solely by one, without Accomplices and Partakers in the Crime, he alone is responsible; and wholly bound to make Satisfaction; I mean, he only is bound so long as he lives; but if the Injury descends as a burden upon the Estate, then he who enjoys the Estate becomes bound to make Satisfaction; as I shall shew afterwards.

2. If the Injury was done by more, who did all equally concur to the doing of it, they are all equally bound to make Satisfaction, and they are bound to concur together to that Purpose; and in Case of such concurrence, every one is not bound to satisfy for the whole, but *pro rata parte*, for his share; provided they do among them make full Satisfaction.

3. If all will not concur, those that are willing are bound among them to make Reparation for the Injury: nay, if all the rest refuse to join with thee in it, thou art bound *in solidum* to make full Reparation so far as thou art able; because every one was guilty of the whole Injury. For instance, if four Men conspire together to cheat a Man, or to rob him, any one of these, if the rest refuse, is bound to make entire Satisfaction; yea, though he was only partaker in the Benefit; because, as I said before, he is guilty of the whole Injury.

4. If the Injury be done by more, who do unequally concur to the doing of it, he that is Principal is chiefly and principally bound to make Satisfaction: and here I do not take *Principal* strictly in the Sense of the Law, but in the Sense of Equity; not for him always who is the more immediate cause of the Injury, but for him who was the greatest cause, and by whose influence chiefly it was procured and done: but if the Principal will not, the Accessories and Instruments are bound, at least for their share, and according to the proportion of the hand they had in it. But if the Principal do satisfy in the name, and upon the account of

the rest, then the Accessories are free from an Obligation to Restitution, and are only bound to Repentance.

5. If the Injury devolve upon another, by descending as a burden upon the Estate, he who enjoys the Estate is bound to make Satisfaction. And when Injuries do thus descend as Burdens and Incumbrances upon Estates, and when not, the Civil Laws of the Place where we live must determine: But then where my Case falls within the compass of the Law, I am bound voluntarily to satisfy without the Compulsion of the Law. For instance, If an Estate fall to me charged with a Debt, which hath been unjustly detained, I am bound voluntarily to discharge the Debt, so soon as it appears to me, before I am compell'd thereto by the Law.

6. As for Personal Injuries which do not lie as Burdens upon the Estate, nor do by the Law descend upon the Son or Heir, though in strict Justice a Man be not bound to make Compensation for them, for that would be endless, & *infinitum in lege repudiatur*, No law can take notice of that which is infinite and endless; for *quæ exitum non habent habentur pro impossibilibus*, Those things which have no end, to which no bounds can be set, are esteemed among things impossible, to which no Man can be obliged: but though in strict Justice the Heir be not bound to make Reparation for the Personal Injuries of him whom he succeeds in the Estate, yet in many Cases it is equitable, and generous, and christian, for such Persons to make some kind of Reparation for palpable and notorious Injuries. For instance, if I be Heir to an Estate, part of which I know certainly was injuriously gotten, it is not only Christian, but prudent to make Satisfaction in the Case to the party injur'd, if certainly known; if not, to give it to the Poor; for by this means I may take out the *Moth* which was bred by Injustice in the Estate, and rub off the *Rust* that sticks to the Gold and Silver which was got by Oppression or Fraud, and so free the remaining part of the Estate from that secret and divine *Nemesis* which attends it and follows it. And for the same Reason, it is very Noble and Christian for the Son and Heir of an unjust Father to make some Reparation for his Father's injuries by Restitution, if the thing be capable of it: if not, by doing all good Offices to the injur'd Persons, which is some kind of Compensation. And in this Case the Obligation is greater, because by this means a Man does not only do what in him lies to cut off *the curse* which by his Father's oppression and injustice is *entail'd* upon the Family and Estate; but likewise because a Son ought much more to be concern'd for his Father than any other Person, and to consult the Honour and Reputation both of him and his own Family; and the Reparation which the Son makes, is in some sort the Father's Act, because he succeeds him; and comes in his stead.

Secondly, As to the Persons to whom Satisfaction is to be made. For the Resolution of those Cases which may fall under this Head, I shall lay down these Propositions.

1. If the injured Person be certainly known, and be alive and extant, the Satisfaction is to be made to him.

2. If he be not alive, or which is all one, not to be found or come at, Satisfaction is to be made to his nearest Relations, his Wife, or Children, or Brothers, or other nearest Kindred. The Reason is, because Satisfaction being due, and I having no right to keep that which I have injuriously gotten, if I cannot restore it to the Party himself, I ought in all reason to place it there where I may most reasonably presume the Party injur'd would have bestow'd his Estate, and this part of it amongst the rest, had he been possess'd of it. And by the same reason that I am bound thus to restore the part of his Estate which I have injuriously taken or detained from him, I am likewise obliged to give Satisfaction to the same Person for any other Injury; for to whomsoever I would pay a Debt due to one that is deceased, to the same Person I ought to give Satisfaction for the Injuries by which a Debt is, though not formally, yet virtually contracted.

3. If the Party injured be not certainly known, or have no near Relations known to me, in that case I think it very advisable to give so much to the Poor, or to some Charitable use; or if the Party injured be not capable of proper Satisfaction, as sometimes it is a Community and Body of Men that you have injured, in this case it is proper to repair the Injuries to Communities or Bodies of Men,

by

by equivalent good Offices, or by some publick good Work, which may be of common Benefit and Advantage. This is the *Fifth* thing I propos'd to speak to, the Persons concern'd in Restitution; both the Persons who are bound to make Restitution, and the Persons to whom it is to be made. Of the rest hereafter.

S E R M O N CXVII.

The Nature and Necessity of Restitution.

LUKE XIX. 8, 9.

And if I have taken any thing from any Man by false Accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is Salvation come to this House.

*The second
Sermon on
this Text.*

IN speaking to these Words, I propos'd to consider,

First, The Nature of this Duty of Restitution.

Secondly, To shew the Necessity of it.

Thirdly, To persuade Men to the Discharge of it.

In treating of the Nature of Restitution, I have consider'd,

I. The Act.

II. The Extent of it.

III. The manner how it is to be perform'd.

IV. The Measure of it.

V. The Persons who are to make Restitution; and the Persons to whom Restitution is to be made. I now proceed to consider,

VI. The Time when Restitution is to be made. In these Cases a Man is not tied up to an instant, not just to the present time, unless the Case be such, that he can never do it, if he do not do it then. As if a Man lie upon his Death-Bed; that is a Case that admits of no delay, a Man should hasten Restitution, as he would do the making of his will, and the disposal of his Estate; lest if he do not do it presently, he lose his opportunity of doing it for ever: but ordinarily, a Man is not so strictly tied up to moments, and to the present time. It is sufficient that a Man be for the present resolv'd to do it so soon as morally he can, so soon as he would do other Actions of great moment and concernment. And to this purpose the Text gives us an excellent Pattern; *Zacchæus* the same day he repented, took up this Resolution, and to oblige himself effectually to put it in Execution, he publickly declares it, and before all the People offers to make Restitution to all whom he had injur'd.

Therefore take heed of all unnecessary delays in these matters: for though God would accept of a firm and sincere Resolution in this Case, if a Person thus resolv'd should, before he could bring his Resolution to effect, happen to be cut off by Death, or be otherwise render'd incapable of doing it; I say, though God would accept such a Resolution as this, yet he will not interpret that to be a sincere Resolution which a Man is negligent to put in practice; for every neglect of putting our Resolution in practice, is a degree of quitting and altering it; and he who did not do what he was resolv'd to do, when he had an opportunity and ability of doing it, is justly presumed to have let fall his Resolution.

Therefore let no Man presume upon his good Intention and Resolution in this kind; for they are only acceptable to God so far as they are sincere and real; and they are only so far sincere and real, as the Man that makes them is ready to put them in execution so soon as morally he can. And if thou carelessly and supinely trifle away thy opportunities in this kind, God may likewise deprive thee of an opportunity

opportunity for ever. For all the while thou wilfully neglectest to make Restitution, thou art guilty of the Injury; and there are hardly two Sins that cry louder to God for a quick and speedy revenge, than Injustice and Oppression, Deceit and Fraud. God many times takes such Causes into his more immediate cognizance, 1 Theff. iv. 6. *Let no Man deceive or go beyond his Brother in any thing: for God is the avenger of such.* And David tells us, that God in a peculiar manner abhors the Blood-thirsty and deceitful Man; and threatens that *he shall not live out half his Days.* And God by the Prophet, Mal. iii. 5. tells us, that *He will be a swift Witness against the oppressors.* And if God be so swift to take vengeance upon such Persons, surely then they are concerned to be very quick and speedy in making Satisfaction for their Injuries and Oppressions, lest Divine Vengeance prevent them, and instead of making Reparation to Men, they be call'd upon to make Satisfaction to the Justice of God; and you know who hath said it, that *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

You therefore that have hitherto neglected this Duty, delay it no longer; by all means discharge your Consciences of this Burden, before you come to lie upon a Death-Bed. Then the Consciences of the worst of Men begin to work, like a Stomach oppress'd and surcharged with Meat; and then they are willing for their ease to vomit up those Estates which they have devour'd by fraud and injustice; then they begin to consider the difficulty of being saved, and to fear that it will be impossible for them ever to enter in at the strait Gate, thus laden with the spoils of violence and deceit; even those that have the hardest and most seared Consciences, will be touched with the Sense of such great Sins at such a time: but do not thou defer this Work to that time, for these two Reasons:

1. Because it cannot be so acceptable to God, to make Restitution at such a time, as when thou art in health and in hopes of longer Life. To give a Man his own, when thou canst enjoy it and use it no longer, this is next to detaining of it.

2. Because in all probability the Restitution which is then made will not prove so effectual. What thou dost thy self, that thou art sure is done: but what thou leavest to be done by thy Executors, and chargest upon them, thou art not sure will be done; ten to one but if they can find out any trick and evasion in Law, either to delay or avoid the doing of it, it shall either never be done, or very slowly. This is the sixth thing, the time when Restitution is to be made.

But before I leave this Head, there is one case very proper to be considered which relates to this Circumstance of Time, and that is concerning Injuries of a very ancient date; that is, how far this Duty of Restitution is to look backward, and whether it doth not expire by tract of Time? For answer to this, I shall lay down these Propositions.

At what distance of time soever the Law would in the Case make Reparation and give Satisfaction, we are undoubtedly bound in Conscience voluntarily to give it. I deliver this generally, because, though it be possible some Civil Laws may be in some Cases unreasonable in this matter, yet they are our best Rule and Guide; and speaking generally and for the most part, they are as equitable as the Reason of Man could devise. Not that we are to tie our selves strictly to the Law, so as not to go farther, if Reason and Equity require; for, as Seneca says, *Parum est ad legem bonum esse, It is no great argument of goodness to be just as good as the Law requires.* Therefore I think it will very well become a good Man, in many Cases, rather to be better than the Law, than to keep strictly to it.

2. In Cases where the Law hath not determined the time, we may do well to observe a proportion to what the Law hath determined in other Cases, which come nearest our own Case.

3. When the Injury is so old, that the Right which the injured Person had to Reparation is reasonably presumed to be quitted and forsaken, then the Obligation to Satisfaction ceaseth and expires. The Reason is plain, because every Man may recede from his own Right, and give it up to another; and where a Man may reasonably be presumed to have parted with his Right to another, the Obligation to Restitution ceaseth, and the Right of claiming it. Now when a thing begins *haberi pro derelicto*, that is, when a Right may reasonably be presumed to be quitted and forsaken, cannot in general be determined: but this must be estimated according

according to the importance of the right and thing in controversy, as whether it be more or less considerable; and according to the Reason and Determination of Laws about things of this Nature. To illustrate this Rule by Instances. The Saxons, Danes, and Normans, did at several times invade and conquer this Nation, and conquer'd it we will suppose unjustly, and consequently did hold and possess that which truly belonged to others, contrary to right; and several of the Posterity of each of these do probably to this day hold what was then injuriously gotten; I say in this case the Obligation to Satisfaction and Restitution is long since expired, and the Original Title which those who were dispossess'd had, is reasonably presumed to be long since quitted and forsaken; and that for very wise Reasons in Law and Government; because it would confound and unsettle all Estates, if every thing, the Original Title whereof is naught, were to be restored; and it is but equal to presume, that all Mankind are so reasonable, as to quit their right in such Cases, rather than to cause endless disturbances, and to have the guilt of Injustice everlastingly perpetuated. And tho' it be a rule in Civil Law, that *Vitiosum initio, tractu temporis non convalescit*, A Title originally bad, can never by time be made just; it is only true thus far, that time in it self doth not alter the Nature of things: but considering the necessities of the World, and the infinite difficulties of retrieving an antient Right, and the Inconveniencies, and disturbances that would thereby redound to Human Society, it is better that an Injury should be perpetuated, than that a great inconveniency should come by endeavouring to redress it; so that altho' considering a thing simply in it self, an Injury is so far from being lessen'd or null'd by tract of Time, that it is increased; and the longer it continues, the greater it is; yet by accident, and in compliance with the necessity of things, length of time may give a right to that which was at first injuriously possess'd. *Judg. xi. 26.* Thus *Jeptah* reasons with the King of *Ammon*, who had made War for recovery of an antient Right, as he suppos'd. And tho' the Instances I have given of the unjust Conquest of a Nation be great and publick; yet the same is to be determined proportionably in less and particular Cases. And thus I have done with the *sixth* thing.

VII. And *lastly*, As to the order of Restitution. When we have injur'd a great many, and are not able to make Restitution to all at once, our best Prudence and Discretion must govern us herein. Because no certain Rule can be given, which will reach all Cases, I will only say this in general, that it is reasonable first to make Reparation for the oldest and greatest Injuries; and, *cæteris paribus*, if all other Considerations be equal, to consider those first who are most necessitous, and if there be any other special Reason and Obligation arising from the Nature of the Injury, or the Circumstances of the Person injur'd, to have regard to them. I come now in the

Second place, to confirm the truth of the Proposition, that to make Restitution and Satisfaction to those whom we have injur'd, is a proper and necessary Fruit of a true Repentance. And this will appear if we consider these *two* things.

I. Our Obligation to this Duty,

II. The Nature of Repentance.

I. Our Obligation to this Duty. Upon the same account that we are obliged to Repentance, we are obliged to Restitution; and both these Obligations arise from natural Equity and Justice. All Sin is an Injury done; and tho' Repentance be not strictly Satisfaction, yet it is the best we can make; and he is unjust, who having done an Injury, does not make the best Reparation he can. But now there are some Sins, in which, besides the injury that is done to God by them, upon the general account, as they are Sins and Violations of his Laws, there is likewise a particular injury done to Men; and such are all those, the effect whereof redounds to the prejudice of other Men: such are Fraud and Oppression, and all other Sins whereby others are injur'd. So that in these kinds of Sins, there are two things considerable, the irregularity and viciousness of the Act, and the evil Effects of it upon other Men: the former respects the Law, and calls for Sorrow and Repentance for our Violation of it; the latter respects the Person that is injur'd, and calls for Satisfaction and Restitution. So that our Obligation to Restitution is founded in the immutable and indispensable Law of Nature, which is, *To do that to another, which we would have another do to us.* We would have no Man be injurious

injurious to us, or if he hath been so, we would have him make Satisfaction and Reparation to us of the Injury he hath done; and we take it grievously from him, if he do not. Now nothing is more just and equitable, than that we should do that to others which we in like case would expect from them: for the very same obligation that lies upon others towards us, does lie upon us in regard to others.

II. This will yet further appear, if we consider the Nature of Repentance, which is to be sorry for what we have done, and not to do the like for the future. Now if thou be sorry for what thou hast done, thou wishest with all thy Heart thou hadst not done it; and if thou dost so, thou wilt undo, as much as in thee lieth, what thou hast done. Now the best way to undo an Injury, is to make Reparation for it; and till we do this, we continue in the Sin. For if it was a Sin to do the Injury at first, it is the same continued, not to make Satisfaction; and we do not cease to commit the Sin, so long as we detain that which is another's Right. Nothing but Restitution can stop the progress of Sin; for if it be a Sin to take that which is another Man's from him by fraud and violence, it is the same continued and virtually repeated, to detain and keep it from him; and nothing more contrary to Repentance, than to continue in the Sin thou pretendest to repent of. For how art thou sorry for doing of it, if thou continuest to do it, if thou wilt go on to do it, and do it again? How dost thou hate thy Sin, if thou enjoy the Benefit and reap the Advantage of it? If thou dost this, it is an Argument thou lovest thy Sin still: for thou didst never love it for it self, but for the Profit of it; and so long as thou retainest that, thou canst not be quit of the Sin. Thou holdest fast thy Sin so long as thou refusest to make Satisfaction for it; and Repentance without Restitution differs as much from true Repentance, as continuance in Sin does from the forsaking of it. *Si res aliena non redditur, non agitur pœnitentia, sed fingitur*; so St. Augustin; *If we do not restore that which we have injuriously detained from another, our Repentance is not real, but feigned and hypocritical*, and will not be effectual to the obtaining of our Pardon. 'Tis a very common, but a true and terrible saying, *Non demittitur peccatum, nisi restituatur ablatum. No Remission without Restitution.* If we will inherit the Profit and Advantage of Sin, we cannot think it unreasonable or unjust that we should inherit the Punishment of it.

When the Scripture speaks of Repentance, it frequently mentions Restitution as a proper Fruit and Effect of it, and as a necessary and indispensable Condition of Pardon and Life. Ezek. xxxij. 14, 15, 16. *Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: if he turn from his Sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he hath robbed, &c.* As if he had said, when I denounce Death and Destruction to the wicked, there is but this one way to escape it, and that is by Repentance; but then take notice what a Repentance it is that will avail to this end; it is not a bewailing our selves, and lamenting over our Sins, but a forsaking of them and returning to our Duty; *If we turn from our Sin, and do that which is lawful and right.* For instance, if he hath been guilty of Injustice and Oppression; if he leave his Course, and deal justly and righteously with his Neighbour, and not only so, but he also make Restitution for the Injury he hath done, and restore what he hath unjustly detained and taken away; *If he restore the pledge, and give again that he hath robbed, and do no Injustice for the future, but walk in the Statutes of Life without committing iniquity*; upon these Terms and no other he shall live, he shall not die. Yea, the very light of Nature could suggest thus much to the People of Nineveh, that there was no hope, without this Fruit of Repentance, of appeasing God's Wrath. Therefore the King and the Princes, after all the external solemnity of fasting and sackcloth, and crying mightily, they decree that Every one should return from the evil of his ways, and from the violence that was in their Hands, *ut rapina manus vacuifaciat, & rapta restituat, sine quo non est vera pœnitentia*; so Grotius upon the place, *That he empty his hands of the spoils of Rapine and Oppression*, that is, that he make Restitution, without which there can be no Repentance: And upon their doing this, 'tis said, that God spared them, v. 10. *And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways.* 'Tis not said, that he saw their fasting and sackcloth, but he saw their works, the real Fruits and Effects of their Repentance; and

and upon this it was that *God repented of the evil he said he would do to them, and he did it not.* And elsewhere we find, that God speaks with great Indignation of the most solemn Repentance which is not accompanied with this Fruit, *Isa. lviii. 3, 4, 5, 6.* The People tell God how *they had fasted and afflicted their Soul, and made their Voice to be heard on high:* but God despiseth all this, because it was not accompanied with this Fruit of Repentance. *Is it such a fast as I have chosen? &c.* There is so much of natural Justice and Equity in Restitution, and it is so proper a Fruit of Repentance, that, as *Grotius* observes, it is not only the Doctrine of the *Jews* and *Christians*, but of *Heathens* and *Mahometans*, that the Repentance which does not produce this Fruit, is feigned, and will never avail with God for Pardon and Mercy. Thus much for Confirmation of this Doctrine.

The *Third* and *last* thing I proposed was to persuade to the Practice of this Duty; and this may serve by way of Application of the Doctrine of Restitution. The use we make of it is,

First, To persuade Men to the Practice of this difficult Duty. I doubt not but the Arguments I have used are sufficient to convince us of the Equity and Necessity of Restitution; but what Arguments shall I use to persuade to the Practice and Exercise of it? When we press Men to their Duty, tho' we have some Advantages on our side, yet we have also great Disadvantages. We have this advantage, that we have the Reason and Consciences of Men on our side: but then we have this disadvantage, that we have to contend either with the Lusts or Interests of Men, or both: Now that these are usually more powerful, is evident in that the Lusts and Interests of Men do so frequently byass and draw them to do things contrary to Reason and Conscience. When we persuade Men to be just, and to make Restitution to those whom they have injur'd, 'tis true we have not to contend with the Lusts of Men, with any corrupt and vicious Inclination of Nature. There are some Sins that have their rise from Mens natural Tempers, as Passion and Lust, and those sensual Vices that abound in the World: but there's nothing in any Man's natural Temper and Disposition that inclines him to be unjust, no Man's Complexion doth particularly dispose him to lie or steal, to defraud his Neighbour, or detain his Right from him; it is only the Interests of Men that prompt them to these things; and they are upon this account the more inexcusable, because no Man is inclined to these Sins from particular Temper and Constitution: so that an unjust Man is in ordinary Cases and Circumstances a greater Sinner, than a Drunkard or a Lustful Man, because no Man can pretend to be hurried away by the strong Propension and Inclination of his Nature to cheat his Brother; but altho', when we persuade Men to be just, we have not the Lusts of Men to contend withal, yet we have another powerful Adversary, and that is the Interests of Men, which is one of the *Chief Rulers and Governors of this World*; so that when we press Men to Restitution, we touch them in their Interest, which is a very touchy and tender thing; when we tell them that without Restitution no Man can repent and be saved, they think this to be a *very hard saying*, and they know not *how to bear it.*

But certainly it hath all the Reason and Equity in the World on its side. If it be so hard for them to restore that which is another Man's, is it not much harder for him whom thou hast injured, to lose that which is his own? Make it thine own Case; wouldst thou not think it much harder to have thy Right detained from thee by another, than for another to part with that which is not his own?

But I am sensible how little it is, that Reason will sway with Men against their Interest; therefore the best Argument that I can use, will be to satisfy Men, that upon a true and just account, it is not so much their Interest to retain what they have unjustly got, as to make Restitution. And this I shall do, by shewing Men, that to make Restitution is their true Interest, both in respect to themselves, and of their Posterity.

I. In respect to themselves. It is better both in respect of our present Condition in this World, and of our future State.

1. In respect of our present Condition in this World, and that both in respect of our outward Estate, and our inward Peace and Tranquillity.

(1.) In respect of our outward Estate. If we have any belief of the Providence of God, that his Blessing can prosper an Estate, and his Curse consume it and

make it moulder away, we cannot but judge it highly our Interest to clear our Estates of Injustice by Restitution; and by this means to free them from God's Curse. For if any of our Estate be unjustly gotten, it is enough to draw down God's Curse upon all that we have; it is like a moth in our Estate, which will insensibly consume it; it is like a secret Poyson, which will diffuse it self through the whole; like a little Land *in Capite*, which brings the whole Estate into *Wardship*.

Hear how God threatens to blast Estates unjustly gotten, *Job xx. 12, &c.* concluding with these words, *This is the Portion of a wicked Man*, that is, of an unjust Man, *Jer. xvii. 11. As a Partridge sitteth on Eggs, and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth Riches and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a Fool.* Men many times live to see the folly of their Injustice and Oppression, and their Estates wither away before their Eyes: and by the just revenge of God, they are deprived of them in the midst of their days. So that the best way to fix an Estate, and to secure it to our selves, is by Restitution to free it from God's Curse; and when we have done that, how much soever we may diminish our Estate by it, we may look upon our selves as having a better Estate than we had; better, because we have God's Blessing with that which remains. If we believe the Bible, we cannot doubt of this. The Spirit of God tells us this from the Observation of the wisest Men, *Psal. xxxvii. 16. A little that a righteous Man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.* *Prov. xvi. 8. Better is a little with Righteousness, than great Revenues without Right.*

(2.) In respect of inward Peace and Tranquillity, it is highly our Interest to make Restitution. No Man can enjoy an Estate, that does not enjoy himself; and nothing puts a Man more out of the Possession of himself, than an unquiet Conscience; and there are no kind of Sins lie heavier upon a Man's Conscience, than those of Injustice; because they are committed against the clearest natural Light, and there's the least natural Temptation to them. They have these two great Aggravations, that they are Sins most against knowledge, and have most of will in them. There needs no Revelation to convince Men of Sins of Injustice and Oppression; every Man hath those Principles born with him, which will sufficiently acquaint him, that he ought not to be injurious to another. There's nothing that relates to our Duty, that a Man can know with greater certainty than this, that Injustice is a Sin. And as it is a Sin most against knowledge, so it hath most of will in it. Men are hurried away to other Sins by the strong and violent Propensions of their Nature: But no Man is inclined, by his Temper and Constitution, to Fraud and Oppression: And the less there is of Nature in any Sin, there's the less of Necessity, and consequently it is the more voluntary. Now the greater the Aggravations of any Sin are, the greater is the Guilt; and the greater the Guilt is, the more unquiet our Consciences will be: So that, if thou have any regard to the Interest of thine own Peace, if that be considerable to thee, which to wise Men is the most valuable thing in the World, do not for a little Wealth continue in those Sins, which will create perpetual disturbance to thee, and imbitter all the Pleasures of thy Life. Hear how *Job* describes the Condition of the wicked Oppressors in the place before cited, *Job xx. 12, &c. He shall not rejoice in them, because he hath oppressed; because he hath violently taken away a House which he builded not, surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly:* that is, he shall have no inward Peace and Contentment in the midst of all his outward Enjoyments; but his ill gotten Estate will work in his Conscience, and gripe him, as if a Man had taken down Poyson into his Belly.

2. But chiefly, in respect of our future Estate in another World, it is every Man's Interest to make Restitution. Without Repentance we are ruined for ever, and without Restitution no Repentance. *No unrighteous Man hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ.* If thou continue in thy Fraud and Oppression, and carry these Sins with thee into another World, they will hang as a Millstone about thy Neck, and sink thee into eternal Ruin. He that wrongeth his Brother hateth him, and he that hateth his Brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal Life abiding in him, *1 John iii. 15. Rom. i. 18. The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men.* So that if it be Mens Interest to escape the Wrath of God, it concerns us to make Reparation for those Injuries which will expose us to it. That is a dreadful Text, *James v. 1, 2, 3, 4. Go to*

now ye rich Men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten: Your Gold and Silver is canker'd, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire: ye have heaped treasure together for the last Days. Behold! the Hire of the labourers which have reaped down your Fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Do not by detaining the treasures of wickedness, treasure up to your selves wrath against the day of wrath: Do not make your selves miserable for ever, that you may be rich for a little while: do not for a little Silver and Gold, forfeit the eternal inheritance, which was not purchased with corruptible things, but with the precious Blood of the Son of God: And if this Consideration, which is the weightiest in the World, will not prevail with Men, I can only say with the Angel, Rev. xxii. 11. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, let him continue in his Injustice at his peril, and remember what is added at the 12th verse, Behold! I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every Man according as his Work shall be.*

II. In respect of our Children and Posterity, it is greatly our Interest to make Restitution. God many times suffers an Estate got by oppression to prosper for a little while: But there is a curse attends it, which descends upon the Estate like an incumbrance; and Parents many times when they think they entail an Estate, entail Poverty upon their Children. *Job xx. 10.* speaking of the Children of the Oppressor, he saith, *His Children shall seek to please the Poor, and his hands shall restore their Goods.* And *Job xxi. 19.* *God layeth up his iniquity for his Children.* Thou layest up Riches for thy Children; and God lays up thine Iniquity and Injustice for them, the Curse that belongs to them. *Hab. ii. 9, 10, 11.* *Wo to him that covereth an evil covetousness, or gaineth an evil gain to his House, &c.* Thou thoughtest to raise thy Family by those ways; but thou hast consulted shame to thy House. No such effectual way to ruin thy Family, as Injustice and Oppression. As then you would not transmit a Curse to your Children, and devolve Misery upon your Family, free your Estates from the burden and weight of what is other Mens, lest by God's just Judgment and secret Providence, that little which you injuriously detain from others, carry away your whole Estate to them and their Family. God's Providence many times makes abundant Restitution, when we will not.

Having now endeavoured to satisfy Men, that it is their truest Interest, to make Restitution for the Injuries they have done to others, it remains only that I should answer an Objection or two, which Men are apt to make against this Duty.

First, Men say they are ashamed to do it. *Ans.* It is not matter of shame, but of Praise and Commendation. But it may be thou wilt say, It is matter of shame to have injured another; and this is the way to lay open thy shame. Indeed if the Injury were publick, the Restitution ought to be so too, as the only way to take off the shame of the Injury. For thy Restitution doth not in this Case publish thy shame, but thy honesty: but if the Injury was private, thou may'st preserve thy own Credit, by concealing thy self; and provided thou do the thing effectually, thou may'st be as prudent, as to the manner of doing it, as thou pleasest.

Secondly, Another Objection is the prejudice it will be to Mens Estates. But this I have answer'd already, by shewing that it is more their Interest to make Restitution, than to continue in the Sin. I shall only add, that, as our Saviour reasons in another Case, *It is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell.* 'Tis true likewise here, it is profitable for thee, that thou should'st go a Beggar to Heaven, rather than that thou should'st go to Hell, laden with the spoils and guilt of Rapine and Injustice.

Thirdly, The last objection that I shall mention, is disability to make Restitution. This indeed is something; where nothing is to be had, every Man must lose his Right: But then remember, that there must be a hearty Repentance for the Sin; and thy Sorrow must be so much greater, by how much thy Ability to make Restitution is less; and there must be a willing Mind, a firm Purpose and Resolution of doing it, when God shall enable thee, and diligent endeavours to that purpose. Under the Law those who were not able to make Restitution, were sold for six years, if their service did not make Reparation in less time. 'Tis true indeed, the moderation of the Gospel doth not suffer Christians to deal so hardly with one another:

but if the Gospel remit of this rigour, and do not allow Christians to challenge it, we should voluntarily do in effect that which they were forced to, that is, we should use our best endeavours and diligence to put our selves into a Condition of making Satisfaction; and we should not look upon any thing beyond the necessary conveniences of Life as our own, till we have done it; unless the Party injured will recede from his Right, in whole or in part. For though the impossibility of the thing do discharge us for the present, yet the Obligation still lies upon us to do it, so soon as we are able.

And here it will be proper to consider the Case of those who have compounded with their Creditors for a small part, whether they be in Conscience and Equity released from the whole Debt. I am loath to lay unnecessary Burdens upon Mens Consciences, therefore I am very tender in resolving such Cases: but I ought to have a more tender care of the Souls of Men, than of their Estates: therefore to deal plainly, and to discharge my Conscience in this Matter, I think such Persons do, notwithstanding the Composition, stand oblig'd in Equity and Conscience for the whole Debt, and are bound to discharge it so soon as they can with tolerable convenience. My reason is, because, though they be discharged in Law, yet the Law does not intend to take off the Obligation of Conscience or Equity, which they are under; but leaves that as it found it. Thus the Case stands; Men who are in a way of Trade, are engag'd by the necessities of their Calling, to venture a great part of their Estate in other Mens hands, and by this means become liable many times to be undone without their own fault; therefore it is usual, when any Man in a way of Trade becomes disabled, for the Creditors to make such a Composition with him as his Estate will bear; and upon this Composition to give him a full discharge, so as that they cannot afterwards by Law require of him the remainder of their Debt. Now though this be a favour to the Debtor, yet it is principally intended for the benefit of the Creditor; because it being his Act, it is to be presumed, that he intended it as much as may be, for his own Advantage; and so it is, for the Creditor has as much Satisfaction at present as can be had, and the Debtor is hereby left in a capacity of recovering himself again by his industry and diligence, which could not be, if he were not fully discharged; for if he were still liable for the rest, he would continually be obnoxious to Imprisonment, which would render him incapable of following his calling; or if he were at liberty, he could have no Credit to enable him to do any thing in his calling; for who would trust a Man with any thing, who is liable every moment to have it taken from him? So that the Reason of this plenary discharge is this, that Men, who are otherwise hopeful, and in a fair probability of recovering themselves, may not be render'd incapable of getting an Estate afterwards, whereby they may support themselves, and discharge their Debts. Now this discharge being given in order to these ends, it cannot be imagined that it should be intended to defeat them; but it is in all Reason to be supposed, that the Creditors did not intend to take off the Obligation of Equity and Conscience, only to put the Man into a Condition of doing something towards the enabling him to discharge his Debt. So that unless it were express'd at the Composition, that the Creditor would never expect more from him, upon account of Equity and Conscience, but did freely forgive him the rest, the contrary whereof is usually done; I say, unless it were thus express'd, there's no reason why the Creditor's favour in making a Composition should be abused to his prejudice; and why a legal Discharge, given him on purpose for this Reason among others, to put him into a capacity of recovering himself, and giving full Satisfaction, should be so interpreted, as to extinguish the equitable right of the Creditor to the remainder of his Debt.

The *Second* Use of this Doctrine of Restitution should be by way of prevention, that Men would take heed of being injurious, and so take away the occasion of Restitution, and free themselves from the Temptation of not performing so difficult and so unwelcome a Duty. It is much easier of the two, not to cozen or oppress thy Neighbour, than after thou hast done it, it will be to bring thy self to make Restitution: therefore we should be very careful, not to be injurious to any one in any kind; neither immediately by our selves, nor by aiding and assisting others, by our power and interest, or skill in the Law, or by any other way, to do Injustice.

S E R M O N CXVIII.

The Usefulness of Consideration, in order to Repentance.

DEUT. XXXII. 29.

O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

THIS Chapter is call'd *Moses* his Song, in which he briefly recounts the various Providences of God towards the People of *Israel*, and the froward Carriage of that People towards him.

First, He puts them in mind how God had chosen them for his peculiar People, and had by a signal Care and Providence conducted them all that tedious Journey, for the space of forty years in the Wilderness, 'till he had brought them to the promised Land, which they had now begun to take Possession of.

And then he foretels, how they would behave themselves after all this mercy and kindness God had shewn to them, v. 15. *Jesurun waxed fat, and kicked, and forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation.* Upon this he tells them, God would be extremely displeased with them, and would multiply his Judgments upon them, v. 19, 20. *When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his Sons and of his Daughters: And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no Faith.* And v. 23. *I will heap mischief upon them, I will spend mine Arrows upon them.* And then he enumerates the particular Judgments which he would send upon them: nay, he declares he would have utterly consumed them, but that he was loth to give occasion of so much Triumph to his and their Enemies, v. 26, 27. *I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not, that I feared the wrath of the Enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this.* And he adds the Reason of all this severity; because they were so very stupid and inconsiderate, v. 28. *For they are a Nation void of Counsel, neither is there any Understanding in them.*

And in the conclusion of all, he represents God as it were breaking out into this vehement and affectionate Wish, *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.*

O that they were wise, that they understood this! What is that? *This* may refer to all that went before. *O that they were wise* to consider what God had done for them, and what they had done against him, and what he will do against them, if they continue or renew their former Provocations! *O that they were* but duly apprehensive of *this*, and would lay it seriously to Heart!

But from what follows, it seems more particularly to refer to those particular Judgments which God hath threatned them withal, and which would certainly befall them, if they still continued in their Disobedience. *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!* That is, the sad Consequences of these their Provocations, that by the Consideration thereof, they might prevent all those Evils and Calamities, by turning from those Sins which would unavoidably bring them upon them.

From the words thus explain'd, I shall observe these *four* things.

I. That God doth really and heartily desire the Happiness of Men, and to prevent their Misery and Ruin. For the very design of these words is to express this to us, and it is done in a very vehement, and, as I may say, passionate manner.

II. That

II. That it is a great point of Wisdom, to consider seriously the last Issue and Consequence of our Actions, whither they tend, and what will follow upon them. And therefore Wisdom is here described by *the Consideration of our latter end.*

III. That this is an excellent means to prevent that Misery, which will otherwise befall us. And this is necessarily implied in this Wish, that if they would but consider these things, they might be prevented.

IV. That the want of this Consideration is the great cause of Mens Ruin. And this is likewise implied in the words, that one great reason of Mens Ruin is because they are not so wise, as to consider the fatal Issue and Consequence of a sinful Course. I shall speak briefly to each of these.

I. That God doth really and heartily desire the happiness of Men, and to prevent their Misery and Ruin. To express this to us, God doth put on the vehemency of a human Passion: *O that they were wise!* &c. The Laws of God are a clear evidence of this; because the observance of them tends to our Happiness. There is no good Prince makes Laws with any other design, than to promote the Publick Welfare and Happiness of his People: and with much more Reason may we imagine, that the infinite good God does by all his Laws design the Happiness of his Creatures. And the Exhortations of Scripture, by which he enforceth his Laws, are yet a greater evidence how earnestly he desires the Happiness of his Creatures. For it shews that he is concerned for us, when he useth so many Arguments to persuade us to our Duty, and when he expostulates so vehemently with us for our neglect of it, saying to Sinners, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O House of Israel? Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life,* says our Blessed Saviour, with great trouble to see Men so obstinately set against their own Happiness; and again, *How often would I have gathered you, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not!* And to satisfy us yet further, that it is his real desire; by our obedience to his Laws, to prevent our ruin, God doth frequently in Scripture put on the Passions of Men, and use all sorts of vehement expressions to this purpose, *Deut. v. 29. O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my Commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their Children for ever!* And *Psal. lxxxj. 13. O that my People had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their Adversaries.* *Jer. xij. 29. O Israel! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?* And to name but one Text more, when our blessed Saviour wept over *Jerusalem*, how passionately does he wish that *She had known in that her day, the things that belonged to her Peace!*

And if after all this, we can doubt whether the faithful God means as he says, he hath for our farther assurance, and to put the matter out of all doubt, confirmed his Word by an Oath, *Ezek. xxxij. 11. As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the Death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O House of Israel?* So that if Words can be any Declaration of a hearty and sincere desire, we have no reason to doubt, but that God does really desire the Happiness of Men, and would gladly prevent their Ruin and Destruction.

If any now ask, Why then are not all Men happy? Why do they not escape Ruin and Destruction? And particularly why the People of *Israel*, for whom God here makes this Wish, did not escape those Judgments which were threaten'd, the Prophet shall answer for me, *Hos. xij. 9. O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself.* And *David, Psal. lxxxj. 11. My people would not hearken to my Voice, Israel would none of me.* And our blessed Saviour, *Matt. xxij. 37. How often would I have gathered thee, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not!* And *John v. 40. Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have Life.* You see what account the Scripture plainly gives of this matter; it rests upon the wills of Men, and God hath not thought fit to force Happiness upon Men, and to make them wise and good whether they will or no. He presents Men with such Motives, and offers such Arguments to their Consideration, as are fit to prevail with reasonable Men, and is ready to afford them all necessary assistance, if they be not wanting to themselves; but if they will not be wise and consider, if they will stand out against all the Arguments that God can offer; if they will receive the grace of

God in vain, and resist his blessed Spirit, and reject the counsel of God against themselves, God hath not in this Case engaged himself to provide any remedy against the obstinacy and perverseness of Men, but their Destruction is of themselves, and their blood shall be upon their own heads. And there is no nicety and intricacy in this matter; but if Men will consider Scripture and Reason impartially, they will find this to be the plain Resolution of the Case.

So that no Man hath Reason either to charge his Fault, or his Punishment upon God; he is *free from the Blood of all Men*, he sincerely desires our Happiness; but we wilfully ruin our selves: and when he tells us, that *He desires not the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live*; that *He would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*; that *He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*; he plainly means as he says, and doth not speak to us with any reserve, or dark distinction between his *secret and revealed Will*; he does not decree one thing, and declare another.

And if this be so, no Man hath reason to be discouraged from attempting and endeavouring his own Happiness, upon a Jealousy and surmise that God hath by any fatal decree put a bar to it from all eternity: for if he had so absolutely resolved to make the greatest part of Mankind miserable, without any respect to their Actions in this World, he would never have said, that *He desires that all should be saved*; he would not have exhorted all Men *to work out their own Salvation*: had he taken up any such Resolution, he would have declared it to all the World: for he hath Power enough in his Hands *to do what he pleaseth, and none can resist his Will*; so that he did not need to have dissembled the matter, and to have pretended a desire to save Men, when he was resolved to ruin them.

This is the *First*, that God doth really and heartily desire the happiness of Men, and to prevent their Misery and Ruin. I proceed to the

II. That it is a great part of wisdom to consider seriously the last Issue and Consequence of our Actions, and whither the Course of Life which we lead does tend, and what will follow upon it. And therefore *Wisdom* is here explained by *Consideration*; *O that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end!* that is, what will befall them hereafter, what will be the Issue and Consequence of all the Sins and Provocations which they are guilty of.

And this is a principal Point and Property of Wisdom, to look forward, and not only to consider the present Pleasure and Advantage of any Action, but the future Consequence of it: And there is no greater Argument of an imprudent Man, than to gratify himself for the present in the doing of a thing, which will turn to his greater Prejudice afterwards; especially if the future Inconvenience be great and intolerable, as it is in the Case we are speaking of. For eternal Happiness or Misery depends upon the Actions of this present Life; and according as we behave our selves in this World, it will go well or ill with us for ever: so that this is a matter of vast importance, and deserves our most serious thoughts; and in matters of mighty consequence, a wise Man will take all things into Consideration, and look before him as far as he can. And indeed this is the Reason why things of great moment are said to be things of Consequence, because great things depend and are likely to follow upon them: and then surely that is the greatest concernment upon which not only the Happiness of this present Life, but our Happiness to all eternity does depend; and if the good and bad Actions of this Life be of that consequence to us, it is fit every Man should consider what he does, and whither the Course of Life he is engag'd or about to engage in, will lead him at last. For this is true Wisdom, to look to the end of things, and to think seriously beforehand, what is likely to be the event of such an Action, of such a Course of Life. If we serve God faithfully, and do his will, what will be the consequence of that to us in this World and the other: And on the other hand, if we live wickedly, and allow our selves in any unlawful and vicious Practice, what will be the end of that Course.

And to any Man that consults the Law of his own Nature, or the Will of God revealed in Scripture, nothing can be plainer than what will be the end of these several ways. God hath plainly told us, and our own Consciences will tell us the same, *That if we do well, we shall be accepted of God, and rewarded by him*: but if we do ill, *the end of these things is Death, that indignation and wrath, tribulation*

bulation and anguish will be upon every Soul of Man that doth evil; but honour, and glory, and peace to every Man that doth good, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of Men by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel.

So that God hath given us a plain prospect of the different Issues of a virtuous and wicked Life, and there wants nothing but consideration to make us to attend to these things, and to lay them seriously to heart. For while Men are inconsiderate, they go on stupidly in an evil way, and are not sensible of the danger of their present Course, because they do not attend to the consequence of it: but when their Eyes are once opened by Consideration, they cannot but be sadly apprehensive of the mischief they are running themselves upon. If Men would take but a serious and impartial view of their Lives and Actions: if they would consider the tendency of a sinful Course, and whither it will bring them at last; if the vicious and dissolute Man would but look about him, and consider how many have been ruined in that very way that he is in, how many lie *slain and wounded in it*; that *it is the way to Hell, and leads down to the Chambers of Death*; the serious thought of this could not but check him in his Course, and make him resolve upon a better Life. If Men were wise, they would consider the consequence of their Actions, and upon Consideration would resolve upon that which they are convinc'd is best. I proceed to the

III. Thing I propounded, which was, that Consideration of the Consequence of our Actions, is an excellent means to prevent the Mischiefs which otherwise we should run into. And this is necessarily implied in the Wish here in the Text, that if we would but consider these things, they might be prevented. For how can any Man, who hath any love or regard for himself, any tenderness for his own Interest and Happiness, see Hell and Destruction before him, which, if he hold on his evil Course, will certainly swallow him up, and yet venture to go on in his Sins? Can any Man that plainly beholds Misery hastening towards him *like an armed Man*, and *Destruction coming upon him as a whirlwind*, think himself unconcerned to prevent it and flee from it? The most dull and stupid Creatures will start back upon the sight of present danger. *Balaam's Ass*, when she saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his Sword drawn ready to smite her, starts aside, and could not be urged on. Now God hath given us, not only Sense to apprehend a present Evil, but Reason and Consideration to look before us, and to discover Dangers at a distance, to apprehend them as certainly and with as clear a Conviction of the reality of them, as if they threatned us the next moment: And will any considerate Man, who hath calculated the dangerous Events of Sin, and the dreadful Effects of God's Wrath upon Sinners, go on to *provoke the Lord to jealousy, as if he were stronger than he*? It is not to be imagin'd, but that if Men would seriously consider what Sin is, and what shall be the sad Portion of Sinners hereafter, they would resolve upon a better Course. Would any Man live in the Lusts of the Flesh, and of Intemperance, or out of Covetousness defraud or oppress his Neighbour, did he seriously consider, that *God is the avenger of such*: and that *because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the Children of disobedience*.

I should have great hopes of Men's Repentance and Reformation, if they could but once be brought to Consideration: for in most Men it is not so much a positive disbelief of the Truth, as inadvertency and want of Consideration, that makes them to go on so securely in a sinful Course. Would but Men consider what Sin is, and what will be the fearful consequence of it, probably in this World, but most certainly in the other, they could not chuse but fly from it as the greatest evil in the World.

And to shew what Power and Influence Consideration will probably have to bring Men to Repentance, and a change of their Lives, I remember to have somewhere met with a very remarkable story, of one that had a Son that took bad Courses, and would not be reclaimed by all the good Counsel his Father could give him; at last coming to his Father, who lay upon his Death-Bed, to beg his Blessing, his Father instead of upbraiding him with his bad Life, and undutiful Carriage toward him, spake kindly to him, and told him he had but one thing to desire of him, That every day he would retire and spend one quarter of an hour alone by himself; which he promised his Father faithfully to do, and make it good.

After

After a while it grew tedious to him, to spend even so little time in such bad and uneasy Company, and he began to bethink himself, for what Reason his Father should so earnestly desire of him to do so odd a thing for his sake; and his mind presently suggested to him, that it was to enforce him to Consideration; wisely judging that if by any means he could but bring him to that, he would soon reform his Life, and become a new Man. And the thing had its desired effect; for after a little Consideration, he took up a firm Resolution to change the Course of his Life, and was true to it all his days. I cannot answer for the Truth of the Story, but for the Moral of it I will; namely, that Consideration is one of the best and most likely things in the World, to bring a bad Man to a better Mind. I now come to the

IV. And last particular, namely, that the want of this Consideration is one of the greatest Causes of Mens Ruin. And this likewise is imply'd in the Text; and the Reason why God does so vehemently desire that Men would be wise and consider, is, because so many are ruin'd and undone for want of it. This is the desperate folly of Mankind, that they seldom think seriously of the Consequence of their Actions, and least of all such as are of greatest Concernment to them, and have the chief Influence upon their eternal Condition. They do not consider what Mischief and Inconveniency a wicked Life may plunge them into in this World, what Trouble and Disturbance it may give them when they come to die; what Horror and Confusion it may fill them withal, when they are leaving this World, and passing into Eternity; and what intolerable Misery and Torment it may bring upon them to all Eternity. Did Men ponder and lay to heart Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell; and would they but let their Thoughts dwell upon these things, it is not credible that the generality of Men could lead such prophane and impious, such lewd and dissolute, such secure and careless Lives as they do.

Would but a Man frequently entertain his Mind with such Thoughts as these; I must shortly die, and leave this World, and then all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of it will be to me as if they had never been, only that the remembrance of them, and the ill use I have made of them, will be very bitter and grievous to me; after all, Death will transmit me out of this World, into a quite different State and Scene of things, into the presence of that great and terrible, that inflexible and impartial Judge, who will *render to every Man according to his Works*; and then all the Evils which I have done in this Life, will rise up in Judgment against me, and fill me with everlasting Confusion, in that great Assembly of Men and Angels, will banish me from the Presence of God, and all the Happiness which flows from it, and procure a dreadful Sentence of unspeakable Misery and Torment to be past upon me, which I can never get revers'd, nor yet never be able to stand under the weight of it. If Men would but enter into the serious Consideration of these things, and pursue these Thoughts to some Issue and Conclusion, they would take up other Resolutions; and I verily believe, that the want of this hath ruin'd more than even Infidelity it self. And this I take to be the meaning of that question in the *Psalmist*, *Have all the workers of Iniquity no Knowledge?* that is, *no Consideration*; intimating, that if they had, they would do better.

All that now remains, is to persuade Men to apply their Hearts to this piece of Wisdom, to look before them, and to think seriously of the Consequence of their Actions, what will be the final Issue of that Course of Life they are engaged in; and if they continue in it, what will become of them hereafter, what will become of them for ever.

And here I might apply this Text, as God here does to the People of *Israel*, to the publick Condition of the Nation, which is not so very unlike to that of the People of *Israel*; for God seems to have chosen this Nation for his more peculiar People, and hath exercised a very particular Providence towards us, in conducting us through that Wilderness of Confusion, in which we have been wandering for the space of above forty Years; and when things were come unto the last extremity, and we seem to stand upon the very brink of Ruin, *Then* (as it is said of the People of *Israel*, v. 36. of this Chapter) *God repented himself for his servants, when he saw their Power was gone*: that is, that they were utterly unable to help themselves, and to work their own deliverance. And it may

be said of us, as *Moses* does of that People, *Chap. xxxiii. 29. Happy art thou, O Israel, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy Help, and who is the sword of thy Excellency!* Never did any Nation struggle with, and get through so many and so great difficulties, as we have several times done.

And I fear we have behaved our selves towards God not much better than the People of *Israel* did, but, like *Jesurun*, after many deliverances and great mercies, *have waxed fat and kicked, have forsaken the God that made us, and little esteemed the Rock of our Salvation;* by which we have provoked the Lord to jealousy, and have, as it were, forc'd him to multiply his Judgments, and to spend his Arrows upon us, and to hide his face from us, to see what our end will be: so that we have reason to fear, that God would have brought utter Ruin and Destruction upon us, and scatter'd us into corners, and made the remembrance of us to have ceased from among Men, had he not feared the wrath of the Enemy, and lest the adversaries should have behaved themselves strangely, and lest they should say, *Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this;* that is, lest they should ascribe this just Vengeance of God upon a sinful and unthankful Nation, to the goodness and righteousness of their own Cause, and to the favour and assistance of the Idols and false Gods whom they worshipp'd, to the Patronage and Aid of the Virgin *Mary* and the Saints; to whom, contrary to the Will and Command of the true God, they had offer'd up so many Prayers and Vows, and paid the greatest part of their religious Worship. But the Lord hath shewn himself greater than all Gods, and in the things wherein they dealt proudly, that he is above them: for our Rock is not as their Rock, even our enemies themselves being Judges.

And we have been too like the People of *Israel* in other respects also, so fickle and inconstant, that after great deliverances we are presently apt to murmur and be discontented, to grow sick of our own Happiness, and to turn back in our hearts into *Egypt*; so that God may complain of us, as he does of his People *Israel*, that nothing that he could do, would bring them to consideration, and make them better, neither his Mercies nor his Judgments. *Isa. i. 2, 3. Hear, O Heaven! and give ear, O Earth! For the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up Children, but they have rebelled against me. The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib: but Israel doth not know; my People doth not consider.* And so likewise he complains, that his Judgments had no effect upon them; *v. 5. Why should ye be smitten any more? Ye will revolt more and more.* Well therefore may it be said of us, as it was of them in the Verse before the Text, *They are a Nation void of knowledge, neither is there any understanding in them.* And the Wish that follows in the Text, is as seasonable for us as it was for them, *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!*

And by parity of Reason, this may likewise be applied to particular Persons, and to persuade every one of us to a serious Consideration of the final Issue and Consequence of our Actions. I will only offer these two Arguments.

1. That Consideration is the proper Act of reasonable Creatures, and that whereby we shew our selves Men. So the Prophet intimates, *Isa. xlv. 8. Remember this, and shew your selves Men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors!* That is, consider it well, think of it again and again, ye that run on so furiously in a sinful Course, what the end and issue of these things will be. If ye do not do this, you do not shew your selves Men, you do not act like reasonable Creatures, to whom it is peculiar to propose to themselves some end and design of their Actions; but rather like brute Creatures, which have no understanding, and act only by a natural instinct, without any Consideration of the end of their Actions, or of the means conducing to it.

2. Whether we consider it or not, our latter end will come; and all those dismal Consequences of a sinful Course, which God hath so plainly threatned, and our own Consciences do so much dread, will certainly overtake us at last; and we cannot, by not thinking of these things, ever prevent or avoid them. Death will come, and after that the Judgment, and an irreversible Doom will pass upon us according to all the evil that we have done, and all the good that we have neglected to do in this Life, under the heavy weight and pressure whereof we must lie groaning, and bewailing our selves to everlasting Ages.

God

God now exerciseth his Mercy and Patience and Long-suffering towards us, in expectation of our amendment; he reprieves us on purpose that we may repent, and in hopes that we will at last consider and grow wiser; for *he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance*: but if we will trifle away this Day of God's Grace and Patience, if we will not consider and bethink ourselves, there is another Day that will certainly come, *That great and terrible Day of the Lord, in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat; the Earth also, and the Works that are therein, shall be burnt up.*

Seeing then all these things shall be, let us consider seriously what manner of Persons we ought to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness, waiting for, and hastening unto the coming of the Day of God; To whom be glory now and for ever.

S E R M O N CXIX.

The Danger of Impenitence, where the Gospel is preach'd.

M A T T H. XI. 21, 22.

Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida: for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of Judgment, than for you.

AFTER our Blessed Saviour had instructed, and sent forth his Disciples, he himself went abroad to preach unto the Cities of *Israel*; particularly he spent much time in the Cities of *Galilee*, *Chorazin*, and *Bethsaida*, and *Capernaum*, preaching the Gospel to them, and working many and great Miracles among them; but with little or no success: which was the cause of his denouncing this terrible Woe against them, v. 20. *Then began he to upbraid the Cities wherein most of his mighty Works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee Chorazin, &c.*

In which words our Saviour declares the sad and miserable Condition of those two Cities, *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, which had neglected such an opportunity, and resisted and withstood such means of Repentance, as would have effectually reclaimed the most wicked Cities and People that can be instanced in any Age, *Tyre* and *Sidon* and *Sodom*; and therefore he tells them, that their Condition was much worse, and that they should fall under a heavier Sentence at the day of Judgment, than the People of those Cities, whom they had always look'd upon as the greatest Sinners that ever were in the World. This is the plain meaning of the words in general; but yet there are some difficulties in them, which I shall endeavour to clear, and then proceed to raise such Observations from them, as may be instructive and useful to us.

The Difficulties are these:

- I. What Repentance is here spoken of; whether an external Repentance, in shew and appearance only, or an inward and real and sincere Repentance.
- II. In what sense it is said, that *Tyre and Sidon would have repented*.
- III. What is meant by their *would have repented long ago*.
- IV. How this Assertion of our Saviour's, that Miracles would have converted *Tyre and Sidon*, is reconcileable with that other Saying of his, *Luke xvi. 31.* in the Parable of the rich Man and *Lazarus*, that *those who believed not Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

I. What Repentance is here spoken of; whether a mere external and hypocritical Repentance in shew and appearance only, or an inward and real and sincere Repentance.

The reason of this Doubt depends upon the different Theories of Divines, about the sufficiency of Grace accompanying the outward means of Repentance, and whether an irresistible degree of God's Grace be necessary to Repentance; for they who deny sufficient Grace to accompany the outward means of Repentance, and assert an irresistible degree of God's Grace necessary to Repentance, are forced to say that our Saviour here speaks of a mere external Repentance: because if he spake of an inward and sincere Repentance, then it must be granted, that sufficient inward Grace did accompany the Miracles that were wrought in *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, to bring Men to Repentance; because what was afforded to them, would have brought *Tyre* and *Sidon* to Repentance. And that which would have effected a thing, cannot be denied to be sufficient; so that unless our Saviour here speaks of a mere External Repentance, either the outward Means of Repentance, as Preaching and Miracles, must be granted to be sufficient to bring Men to Repentance, without the inward Operation of God's Grace upon the Minds of Men; or else a sufficient degree of God's Grace must be acknowledged to accompany the outward means of Repentance. Again, if an irresistible degree of Grace be necessary to true Repentance, it is plain, *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* had it not, because they did not repent; and yet without this, *Tyre* and *Sidon* could not sincerely have repented: therefore our Saviour here must speak of a mere External Repentance. Thus some argue, as they do likewise concerning the Repentance of *Nineveh*, making that also to be merely External, because they are loath to allow true Repentance to Heathens.

But it seems very plain, that our Saviour does speak of an inward and true and sincere Repentance; and therefore the Doctrines that will not admit this, are not true. For our Saviour speaks of the same kind of Repentance, that he upbraideth them with the want of, in the Verse before the Text. *Then began he to upbraid the Cities wherein most of his mighty Works were done, because they repented not*; that is, because they were not brought to a sincere Repentance, by his preaching, which was confirmed by such great Miracles. 'Tis true indeed, he mentions the outward Signs and Expressions of Repentance, when he says, *They would have repented in Sackcloth and Ashes*; but not as excluding inward and real Repentance, but supposing it, as is evident from what is said in the next Verse, *It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of Judgment, than for you*: for though an external and hypocritical Repentance may prevail with God to put off temporal Judgments, yet surely it will be but a very small, if any mitigation of our Condemnation at the Day of Judgment: so that the Repentance here spoken of cannot, without great violence to the scope and design of our Saviour's Argument, be understood only of an external shew and appearance of Repentance.

II. The next Difficulty to be cleared is, in what Sense it is here said, that *if the mighty Works which were done by our Saviour among the Jews, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented*.

Some to avoid the inconvenience which they apprehend to be in the more strict and literal Sense of the words, look upon them as Hyperbolical, as we say, *Such a thing would move a Stone*, or the like, when we would express something to be very sad and grievous; so here to aggravate the Impenitence of the *Jews*, our Saviour says, that they resisted those Means of Repentance, which one would think should almost have prevailed upon the greatest and most obdurate Sinners that ever were; but not intending to affirm any such thing.

But there is no colour for this, if we consider that our Saviour reasons from the Supposition of such a thing, that therefore the Case of *Tyre* and *Sidon* would really be *more tolerable at the day of Judgment than theirs*; because *they would have repented*, but the *Jews* did not.

Others perhaps understand the words too strictly, as if our Saviour had spoken according to what he certainly foreknew would have happen'd to the People of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, if such Miracles had been wrought among them. And no doubt but in that Case God did certainly know what they would have done: but yet I should rather chuse to understand the words as spoken popularly, according to what

in all human appearance and probability would have happen'd, if such External Means of Repentance, accompanied with an ordinary Grace of God, had been afforded to them of *Tyre and Sidon*. And thus the old *Latin* Interpreter seems to have understood the next words, *If the mighty Works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, εὐσταν ἂν, forte mansissent, it would perhaps have remained to this day, in all likelihood it had continued till now.* Much the same with that passage of the Prophet, *Ezek. iii. 5, 6. Thou art not sent to a People of a strange Speech, and of a hard Language, but to the House of Israel: Surely had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee; that is, in all probability they would; there is little doubt to be made of the contrary.* And this is sufficient Foundation for our Saviour's reasoning afterwards, that *it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of Judgment, than for them.* And if we may judge what they would have done before, by what they did afterward, there is more than probability for it: for we read in the 21st Chapter of the *Acts*, v. 3. and v. 7. that the Inhabitants of *Tyre and Sidon* receiv'd the Gospel, and kindly entertain'd St Paul, when the *Jews* rejected them both. The

III. Thing to be cleared, is, What is meant by *long ago; They would have repented long ago.*

Some understand this, as if our Saviour had said, they would not have stood out so long against so much Preaching, and so many Miracles; but would at first have repented, long before our Saviour gave over *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* for obstinate and incorrigible Sinners; they would not only have repented at last, but much sooner, and without so much ado.

But this does not seem to be the meaning of the words; but our Saviour seems to refer to those ancient Times *long ago*, when the Prophets denounced Judgments against *Tyre and Sidon*, particularly the Prophet *Ezekiel*; and to say, that if in those days the Preaching of that Prophet had been accompanied with such Miracles as our Saviour wrought in the Cities of *Galilee, Tyre and Sidon* would in those days have repented.

The last and greatest difficulty of all is, How this Assertion of our Saviour, that Miracles would have converted *Tyre and Sidon*, is reconcilable with that Discourse of our Saviour's, *Luke xvi.* in the Parable of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*, that *Those who would not believe Moses and the Prophets, would not have been persuaded, though one had rose from the Dead.*

The true answer to which difficulty, in short, is this; That when our Saviour says, *If they believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the Dead*; he does not hereby weaken the force of Miracles, or their aptness to convince Men, and bring them to Repentance; but rather confirm it; because *Moses and the Prophets* had the Attestation of many and great Miracles; and therefore there was no reason to think, that they who would not believe the Writings and Doctrine of *Moses and the Prophets*, which had the Confirmation of so many Miracles, and was owned by themselves to have so, should be wrought upon by one particular Miracle, *The coming of one from the Dead, and speaking unto them*: or, however this might move and astonish them for the present, yet it was not likely that the Grace of God should concur with such an extraordinary Means, to render it effectual to their Conversion and Repentance, who had wilfully despised, and obstinately rejected that which had a much greater Confirmation than the Discourse of a Man risen from the Dead, and was appointed by God for the ordinary and standing Means of bringing Men to Repentance. So that our Saviour might with reason enough pronounce that *Tyre and Sidon*, who never had a standing Revelation of God to bring them to Repentance, nor had rejected it, would, upon Miracles extraordinarily wrought among them, have repented; and yet deny it elsewhere to be likely, that they who rejected a standing Revelation of God, confirmed by Miracles, which call'd them to Repentance, would probably be brought to Repentance by a particular Miracle; or that God should afford his Grace to make it effectual for their Repentance and Salvation.

The words being thus cleared, I come now to raise such Observations from them, as may be instructive and useful to us.

I. I observe from this Discourse of our Saviour, that Miracles are of great force and efficacy to bring Men to Repentance.

This

This our Saviour's Discourse here supposeth; otherwise their Impenitence had not been so Criminal and Inexcusable upon that account, *That such mighty works had been done among them*, as would probably have prevailed upon some of the worst People that had been in the World; for such were the Inhabitants of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, guilty of great Covetousness and Fraud, Pride and Luxury, the usual Sins of Places of great Traffick and Commerce: and such, to be sure, was *Sodom*; and yet our Saviour tells us, that the Miracles which he had wrought in the Cities of *Israel*, would, in all probability, have brought those great Sinners to Repentance; namely, by bringing them to Faith, and convincing them of the Truth and Divinity of that Doctrine which he preached unto them, and which contains such powerful Arguments to Repentance and Amendment of Life.

II. I observe likewise from our Saviour's Discourse, that God is not always obliged to work Miracles for the Conversion of Sinners. It is great goodness in him to afford sufficient Means of Repentance to Men, as he did to *Tyre* and *Sidon*, in calling them to Repentance by his Prophet; though such Miracles were not wrought among them, as God thought fit to accompany our Saviour's Preaching withal.

This I observe, to prevent a kind of bold and saucy Objection, which some would perhaps be apt to make; If *Tyre* and *Sidon* would have repented, had such Miracles been wrought among them, as our Saviour wrought in *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, why were they not wrought, that they might have repented? To which it is sufficient Answer to say, That God is not obliged to do all that is possible to be done, to reclaim Men from their Sins; he is not obliged to overpower their Wills, and to work irresistibly upon their Minds, which he can easily do; he is not obliged to work Miracles for every particular Man's Conviction; nor where he vouchsafeth to do this, is he obliged always to work the greatest and most convincing Miracles; his Goodness will not suffer him to omit what is necessary and sufficient to bring Men to Repentance and Happiness; nay, beyond this he many times does more; but it is sufficient to vindicate the Justice and Goodness of God, that he is not wanting to us, in affording the Means necessary to reclaim us from our Sins, and to bring us to Goodness. That which is properly our part, is to make use of those Means which God affords us to become better, and not to prescribe to him how much he should do for us; to be thankful that he hath done so much, and not to find fault with him for having done no more.

III. I observe farther from our Saviour's Discourse, That the external Means of Repentance which God affords to Men, do suppose an Inward Grace of God accompanying them, sufficiently enabling Men to repent, if it be not their own Fault; I say a sufficient Grace of God accompanying the outward Means of Repentance, till by our wilful and obstinate neglect and resistance, and opposition of this Grace, we provoke God to withdraw it from the Means, or else to withdraw both the Grace, and the Means from us: otherwise Impenitence after such External Means afforded, would be no new and special Fault. For if the Concurrence of God's Grace with the outward Means be necessary to work Repentance, then the Impenitence of those to whom this Grace is not afforded, which yet is necessary to Repentance, is neither any new Sin, nor any new Aggravation of their former Impenitence. For no Man can imagine that the just God will charge Men with new Guilt, and increase their Condemnation, for remaining impenitent in such Circumstances in which it is impossible for them to repent.

IV. I observe from this Discourse of our Saviour's, That an irresistible degree of Grace is not necessary to Repentance, nor commonly afforded to those who do repent. God may where he pleaseth, without injury to any Man, over-power his Will, and stop him in his Course, and hinder him from making himself miserable, and by an irresistible Light convince him of his Error and the Evil of his ways, and bring him to a better Mind: But this God seldom does, and when he does it, it is very probable it is not so much for their own sakes, as to make them Instruments of Good to others. Thus by a Secret but over-powering influence he over-ruled the Disciples to follow our Saviour, and to leave their Callings and Relations, and all their temporal Concernments to do it. But one of the most remarkable Examples of this extraordinary Grace of God, is *St. Paul*, who was violently stopt in his course of persecuting the Christians, and convinc'd of his Sin, and brought over to Christianity, in a very extraordinary and forcible manner. And of this

this miraculous and extraordinary Conversion, God himself gives this account, *That he was a chosen Vessel unto him, to bear his name before the Gentiles and Kings, and the children of Israel*, Acts ix. 15. And St. Paul tells us; *Gal. i. 15; 16. That for this end God hath separated him from his Mother's Womb, and call'd him by his Grace, and revealed his Son to him in that extraordinary manner, that he might preach among the Heathen.*

But generally God does not bring Men thus to Repentance; nor is it necessary he should. For if an irresistible degree of Grace were always necessary to bring Men to Repentance, there could be no difference between the Impenitence of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, and of *Tyre* and *Sidon*. For according to this Doctrine of the Necessity of irresistible Grace to the Conversion of every Man, it is evident, that *Tyre* and *Sidon* neither could, nor would have repented, without an irresistible degree of God's Grace, accompanying the outward Means of Repentance which he afforded to them; because such a Degree of Grace is necessary to Repentance, and without it, it is impossible for any Man to repent. But then it is as plain, on the contrary, that if *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* had had the same irresistible degree of God's Grace, together with the outward Means of Repentance afforded to them, that they would have repented as certainly as *Tyre* and *Sidon*. Where then is the reason of upbraiding the Impenitence of the one, more than of the other? Where the Aggravation of the one's Guilt above the other? Where the Justice of punishing the Impenitence of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, more than theirs of *Tyre* and *Sidon*? For upon this Supposition, they must either have repented both alike, or have been both equally impenitent. The Sum of what I have said, is This, That if no Man does, nor can repent, without such a degree of God's Grace as cannot be resisted, no Man's Repentance is commendable, nor is one Man's Impenitence more blameable than another's; *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* can be in no more fault for continuing impenitent, than *Tyre* and *Sidon* were. For either this irresistible Grace is afforded to Men or not: if it be, their Repentance is necessary, and they cannot help it; if it be not, their Repentance is impossible, and consequently their Impenitence is necessary, and they cannot help it neither.

V. I observe from the main scope of our Saviour's Discourse, That the Sins and Impenitence of Men receive their Aggravation, and consequently shall have their Punishment proportionable to the Opportunities and Means of Repentance which those Persons have enjoyed and neglected.

For what is here said of Miracles, is by equality of Reason likewise true of all other Advantages and Means of Repentance and Salvation. The Reason why Miracles will be such an Aggravation of the Condemnation of Men is, because they are so proper and powerful a Means to convince them of the Truth and Divinity of that Doctrine which calls them to Repentance. So that all those Means which God affords to us of the Knowledge of our Duty, of Conviction of the Evil and Danger of a sinful Course, are so many Helps and Motives to Repentance, and consequently will prove so many Aggravations of our Sin and Punishment, if we continue impenitent. The

VI. And last Observation, and which naturally follows from the former, is this, That the Case of those who are impenitent under the Gospel, is of all others the most dangerous, and their Damnation shall be heaviest and most severe.

And this brings the Case of these Cities here in the Text home to our selves. For in truth there is no material difference between the Case of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* and *Capernaum*, and of our selves in this City and Nation, who enjoy the clear Light of the Gospel, with all the freedom, and all the advantages that any People ever did. The Mercies of God to this Nation have been very great, especially in bringing us out of that Darkness and Superstition, which covered this Western part of the World; in rescuing us from that great Corruption and Degeneracy of the Christian Religion which prevailed among us, by so early and so regular a Reformation; and in continuing so long this great Blessing to us. The Judgments of God have been likewise very great upon us for our Sins. *God hath manifested himself by terrible things in righteousness*; our Eyes have seen many and dismal Calamities in the space of a few Years, which call loudly upon us to repent and turn to God. God hath afforded us the most effectual Means of Repentance, and hath taken the most effectual Course of bringing us to it. And tho' our Blessed Saviour

Saviour does not speak to us in Person, nor do we at this day see Miracles wrought among us, as the *Jews* did; yet we have the Doctrine which our blessed Saviour preach'd, faithfully transmitted to us, and a credible Relation of the Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of that Doctrine, and many other Arguments to persuade us of the Truth of it, which those to whom our Saviour spake had not, nor could not then have, taken from the accomplishing of our Saviour's Predictions, after his Death; the speedy Propagation and wonderful Success of this Doctrine in the World, by weak and inconsiderable Means, against all the Power and Opposition of the World; the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the Dispersion of the *Jewish* Nation, according to our Saviour's Prophecy; besides many more that might be mention'd. And which is a mighty Advantage to us, we are free from those Prejudices against the Person of our Saviour and his Doctrine, which the *Jews*, by the Reverence which they bear to their Rulers and Teachers, were generally possess'd withal; we are brought up in the belief of it, and have drunk it in by Education; and if we believe it, as we all profess to do, we have all the Obligation and all the Arguments to Repentance, which the *Jews* could possibly have from the Miracles which they saw; for they were Means of Repentance to them no otherwise than as they brought them to the belief of our Saviour's Doctrine, which call'd them to Repentance.

So that if we continue impenitent, the same woe is denounced against us that is against *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*; and we may be said with *Capernaum*, *to be lifted up to Heaven*, by the enjoyment of the most excellent Means and Advantages of Salvation, that any People ever did; which if we neglect, and still continue wicked and impenitent under them, we may justly fear, that with them *we shall be thrown down to Hell*, and have our place in the lowest part of that dismal Dungeon, and in the very Centre of that fiery Furnace.

Never was their greater cause to upbraid the Impenitence of any People, than of us, considering the Means and Opportunities which we enjoy; and never had any greater reason to fear a severer Doom, than we have. Impenitence in a Heathen is a great Sin; else how should God judge the World? But God takes no notice of that, in comparison of the Impenitence of Christians, who enjoy the Gospel, and are convinced of the Truth, and upon the greatest Reason in the World profess to believe it. We Christians have all the Obligations to Repentance, that Reason and Revelation, Nature and Grace can lay upon us. Art thou convinced that thou hast sinned, and done that which is contrary to thy Duty, and thereby provoked the Wrath of God, and incensed his Justice against thee? As thou art a Man, and upon the Stock of natural Principles, thou art obliged to Repentance. The same Light of Reason which discovers to thee the Errors of thy Life, and challengeth thee for thy Impiety and Intemperance, for thy Injustice and Oppression, for thy Pride and Passion; the same natural Conscience which accuseth thee of any Miscarriages, does oblige thee to be sorry for them, *to turn from thy evil ways*, and *to break off thy Sins by Repentance*. For nothing can be more unreasonable, than for a Man to know a Fault, and yet not think himself bound to be sorry for it; to be convinced of the evil of his ways, and not to think himself obliged by that very Conviction, to turn from it, and forsake it. If there be any such thing as a natural *Law written in Mens Hearts*, which the Apostle tells us the Heathens had, it is impossible to imagine, but that the Law which obliges Men not to transgress, should oblige them to Repentance in Case of Transgression. And this every Man in the World is bound to, though he had never seen the Bible, nor heard of the Name of Christ. And the Revelation of the Gospel doth not supersede this Obligation, but adds new Strength and Force to it: and by how much this Duty of Repentance is more clearly revealed by our Blessed Saviour in the Gospel; by how much the Arguments which the Gospel useth to persuade Men, and encourage them to Repentance, are greater and more powerful; by so much is the Impenitence of those who live under the Gospel the more inexcusable.

Had we only some faint hopes of God's Mercy, a doubtful Opinion and weak Persuasion of the Rewards and Punishments of another World; yet we have a Law within us, which upon the Probability of these Considerations would oblige us to Repentance. Indeed if Men were assured upon good grounds, that there would be no future Rewards and Punishments; then the Sanction of the Law

were gone, and it would lose its force and obligation: or if we did despair of the mercy of God, and had good reason to think repentance impossible, or that it would do us no good; in that case there would be no sufficient motive and argument to repentance: for no man can return to his duty, without returning to the love of God and goodness; and no man can return to the love of God, who believes that he bears an implacable hatred against him, and is resolved to make him miserable for ever. During this persuasion, no man can repent. And this seems to be the reason, why the Devils continue impenitent.

But the Heathens were not without hopes of God's mercy, and upon those small hopes which they had, they encouraged themselves into repentance; as you may see in the Instance of the Ninevites, *let them turn every one from his evil ways, and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* Jonah iii. 8, 9. But if we, who have the clearest discoveries, and the highest assurance of this, who profess to believe that God hath declared himself placable to all mankind, that *he is in Christ reconciling the World to himself*, and that upon our repentance *he will not impute our sins to us*; if we, to whom, *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*, and to whom *life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel*; if after all this, we still go on in an impenitent course, what shall we be able to plead in excuse of our selves at that great day? *The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment* against such an impenitent generation, and condemn it; *because they repented upon the terror of lighter threatnings, and upon the encouragement of weaker hopes.*

And therefore it concerns us, who call our selves Christians, and enjoy the clear revelation of the Gospel, to look about us, and take heed how we continue in an evil course. For if we remain impenitent, after all the arguments which the Gospel, super-added to the light of nature, affords to us to bring us to repentance, it shall not only *be more tolerable for the men of Nineveh, but for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah* the most wicked and impenitent Heathens, *at the day of Judgment, than for us.* For, because we have stronger arguments, and more powerful encouragements to repentance, than they had, if we do not repent, we shall meet a heavier doom, and a fiercer damnation. The Heathen world had many excuses to plead for themselves, which we have not. *The times of that Ignorance God winked at: but now commands all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in Righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

S E R M O N CXX.

Of the Immortality of the Soul, as discover'd by
Nature, and by Revelation.

2 TIM. I. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished Death, and hath brought Light and Immortality to light through the Gospel.

*The first
Sermon on
this Text.*

THE design of the Apostle in these two Epistles to Timothy, is to direct him how he ought to demean himself, in the office which he bore in the church; which he does in the first epistle: and to encourage him in his work; which he does here in the second; in which, after his usual salutation, he endeavours to arm him against the fear of those persecutions, and the shame of those reproaches, which would probably attend him in the work of the Gospel, v. 8. *Be not thou*

therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel, according to the power of God, who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling: as if he had said, The God whom thou serveest in this employment, and by whose power thou art strengthened, is he that hath saved and called us with an holy calling, that is, it is he who by Jesus Christ hath brought Salvation to us, and called us to this holy profession; not according to our works, that is, not that we by any thing that we have done, have deserved this at his hand, but according to his own purpose and grace, that is, according to his own gracious purpose, which was given in Christ before the world began, that is, which from all eternity he decreed and determined to accomplish by Jesus Christ: but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ; that is, which gracious purpose of his is now clearly discover'd by our Saviour Jesus Christ's coming into the World, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

Which words express to us two happy effects of Christ's appearance: *First, The abolishing of death; and, Secondly, The bringing of life and immortality to light.* In the handling of these words, I shall,

First, Open to you the meaning of the several expressions in the Text.

Secondly, Shew what our Saviour Jesus Christ did towards the abolishing of death, and bringing to light life and immortality.

For the *First*, I shall shew,

I. What is here meant by *the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

II. What by *the abolishing of death.*

III. What by *bringing to light life and immortality.*

I. What is here meant by *the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.* The Scripture useth several phrases to express this thing to us. As it was the gracious design of God the Father, so it is call'd *the giving of his Son, or sending him into the world.* John iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.* Gal. iv. 4. *In the fulness of time God sent his Son.* As it was the voluntary undertaking of God the Son, so it is call'd *his coming into the world.* In relation to his Incarnation, whereby he was made visible to us in his body, and likewise in reference to the obscure promises, and prophecies, and types of the Old Testament, it is call'd his *manifestation, or appearance.* So the Apostle expresseth it, 1 John iii. 5. *Ye know that he was manifested to take away our Sins;* by which we are to understand primarily his Incarnation, his appearing in our nature, whereby he became visible to us. As he was God, he could not appear to us, *dwelling in light and glory, not to be approached* by us in this state of *mortality*, and therefore he clothed himself in flesh, that he might appear and become manifest to us.

I say, by his *appearing* we are primarily to understand his Incarnation: yet not only that, but likewise all that was consequent upon this, the actions of his life, and his death and resurrection; because all these concur to the producing of these happy effects mention'd in the Text.

II. What is meant by *the abolishing of death.* By this we are not to understand, that Christ by his appearance hath rooted death out of the world, so that men are no longer subject to it. For we see that even good men, and those who are partakers of the benefits of Christ's death, are still subject to the common law of mortality: but this expression of Christ's having *abolish'd death*, signifies the conquest and victory which Christ hath gained over Death in his own person, in that after he was dead, and laid in his grave, he rose again from the dead, he freed himself from the bands of death, and broke loose from the fetters of it, they *not being able to hold him*, as the expression is, Acts ii. 24. and consequently hath by this victory over it, given us an assurance of a resurrection to a better life. For since Christ hath *abolish'd death*, and triumphed over it, and thereby over the powers of darkness; (for so the Apostle tells us) that *by his death*, and that which followed it, his resurrection from the dead, *he hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil.* The Devil he contributed all he could to the death of Christ, by tempting Judas to betray him, and engaging all his instruments in the procuring of it; as he had before brought in death into the world, by tempting the first Man to sin, upon which death ensued; thus far he prevailed, and thought his kingdom was safe, having procured the death of him who was so great an enemy to it; but Christ by rising from the dead, defeats the Devil

Devil of his design, and plainly conquers him, who had arrogated to himself the power of Death;) I say, since Christ hath thus vanquish'd Death, and triumph'd over it, and him that had the power of it, Death hath lost its dominion, and Christ hath taken the whole power and disposal of it; as you find, *Rev. i. 18. I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of Hell and of Death.* Now Christ hath not only thus conquer'd Death for himself, but likewise for all those who believe on him; so that Death shall not be able to keep them for ever under its power: But Christ by the same power whereby he raised up himself from the dead, will also *quicken our mortal bodies*, and raise them up to a new life; for he keeps *the keys of Hell and Death*: and as a reward of his sufferings and submission to Death, he hath power conferred upon him, *to give eternal life to as many as he pleases.* In this sense, Death, tho' it be not quite chased out of the world, yet it is virtually and in effect *abolished by the appearance of Jesus Christ*, having in a great measure lost its power and dominion; and since Christ hath assur'd us of a final rescue from it, the power of it is render'd insignificant and inconsiderable, and the sting and terror of it is taken away. So the Apostle tells us in the foremention'd place, *Heb. ii. 14, 15.* That Christ having by Death destroy'd him who had the power of Death, that is, the Devil, he hath deliver'd those who thro' fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage. And not only the power and terror of Death is for the present in a great measure taken away; but it shall at last be utterly destroy'd. So the Apostle tells us, *1 Cor. xv. 26. The last enemy that shall be destroy'd is Death*; which makes the Apostle, in the latter end of this Chapter, to break forth into that triumph, *v. 54, 55. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?*

III. What is here meant by *bringing Life and Immortality to light*. *Life and Immortality*, is here by a frequent Hebraism put for *immortal life*; as also immediately before the text, you find *Purpose and Grace*, put for God's *gracious Purpose*. The phrase of *bringing to light* is spoken of things which were before either wholly or in a great measure hid, either were not at all discover'd before, or not so clearly. Now because the Heathens by the light of nature, had some probable conjectures and hopes concerning another life after this, they were in some measure persuaded that when men died, they were not wholly extinguish'd, but did pass into another world, and did there receive rewards suited to their carriage and demeanour in this life; and because the Jews also, before Christ, had these natural suggestions and hopes strengthened and confirmed by revelations, which God made unto them under the Old Testament, therefore we cannot understand this phrase of Christ's *bringing immortal Life to light* absolutely, as if it were wholly a new discovery, which the world had no apprehension of before; but only comparatively, as a thing which was now render'd by the coming of Christ into the world, incomparably more evident and manifest. *Quicquid enim Philosophi, quicquid Rabini eâ de re dicunt, tenebræ sunt, si ad evangelii lucem comparantur: Whatever the Philosophers, whatever the Rabbins say of this matter, is but darkness, compared to the clear light and revelation of the Gospel.* I proceed to the

Second thing I propos'd, *viz. To shew what Christ's coming into the World hath done towards the abolishing of Death, and the bringing of Life and Immortality to light.* I shall speak distinctly to these two.

I. What Christ's appearance and coming into the world hath done towards the abolishing of Death, or how Death is abolished by the appearance of Christ. I have already shewn in the explication, that this phrase, *the abolishing of Death*, signifies the conquest which he made over Death in his own person for himself; the fruit of which victory redounds to us. For in that Christ by his divine power did conquer it, and set himself free from the bands of it, this shews that the power of it is now brought into other hands, that *Christ hath the keys of Hell and Death*; so that tho' the Devil, by tempting to sin, brought Death into the world, yet it shall not be in his power to keep men always under the power of it; and hereby the terror of this great enemy is in a good measure taken away,

and he shall at last be totally destroyed, by the same hand that hath already given him his mortal wound.

Now this is said to be done by the *appearing of Jesus Christ*, for as much as by his coming into the world, and taking our nature upon him, he became capable of encountering this enemy and overcoming him, in such a manner as might give us assurance of a final victory over it, and for the present comfort and encourage us against the fears of it. For,

1. By taking our nature upon him, he became subject to the frailties and miseries of mortality, and liable to the suffering of Death, by which expiation of sin was made. Sin was the cause of Death. So the Apostle tells us, *By man sin entred into the world, and death by sin, so that death came upon all.* Now the way to cure this malady which was come upon our nature, and to remove this great mischief which was come into the world, is by taking away the meritorious cause of it, which is the guilt of sin. Now this Christ hath taken away by his death. Christ, that he might *abolish death*, hath *appeared for the abolition of sin*. So the Apostle tells us, Heb. ix. 26, 27, 28. *But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, εις αἰδερνον ἀμαρτίας, for the abolishing of sin*, and to shew that this was intended as a remedy of the great mischief and inconvenience of mortality, which sin had brought upon mankind, the Apostle immediately adds in the next verse, that *as it is appointed unto all men once to die, so Christ was once offer'd to bear the sins of many*; and by his means the sting of Death is taken away, and Death in effect conquered; the consideration of which makes the Apostle break out into that thankful triumph, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. *O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? The sting of Death is sin: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2. As Christ by taking our nature upon him became capable of suffering death, and thereby making expiation for sin; so by dying he became capable of rising again from the dead, whereby he hath gained a perfect victory and conquest over Death and the powers of darkness. And this account the Apostle gives us of Christ's taking our nature upon him, as being one of the principal ends and designs of it, Heb. ii. 14, 15, 16. *For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that thro' death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; that is, that by taking our nature upon him, he might be capable of encountering this enemy, that is, of encountering Death in his own territories, and beating him in his own quarters; and by rising out of his grave, he might give us full and comfortable assurance of the possibility of being rescued from the power of the grave, and recovered out of the jaws of death.* And therefore the wisdom of God pitched upon this way, as that which was most fit and proper to encourage and bear us up against the terrors of this enemy; and by giving us a lively instance and example of a victory over Death, atchieved by one clothed with mortality like our selves, *we might have strong consolation and good hope thro' grace*, and might be fully assur'd that he who hath conquer'd this enemy for himself, was able also to conquer him for us, and to deliver us from the grave. Therefore the Apostle reasons from the fitness and suitableness of this dispensation, as if no other argument could have been so proper to arm us against the fears of death, and to satisfy us that we should not always be held under the power of it; *For as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that thro' death he might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who thro' fear of death, &c.* The force of which argument is this, That seeing men are of a mortal nature (for that he means by *being partakers of flesh and blood*) nothing can be a greater comfort to us against the fears of Death, than to see Death conquer'd by flesh and blood, by one of the same nature with our selves. Therefore the Apostle adds, v. 16. *For verily he took not on him the nature of Angels, but the seed of Abraham.* If he had assumed the angelical nature, which is immortal, this would not have been so sensible a conviction to us of the possibility of it, as to have a lively instance and example presented us, of one in our nature conquering Death, and triumphing over the Grave. I proceed to the

II. Thing, What Christ hath done towards *the bringing of Life and Immortality to light*. And because I told you that this is comparatively spoken, and signifies to us a greater degree of evidence, and a firmer assurance given us by the Christian Religion, than the world had before, therefore it will be requisite to enquire into these *two things*.

First, What assurance men had or might have had of the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State; before the coming of Christ into the world, and the revelation of the Gospel.

Secondly, What greater evidence, and what higher degree of assurance the Gospel now gives us of immortal Life; what greater arguments this new revelation and discovery of God to the world doth furnish us with, to persuade us of this matter, than the world was acquainted withal before.

First, What assurance men had or might have had of the Immortality of the Soul; and consequently of a future State, before the Revelation of the Gospel by Christ's coming into the world. And here are *two things* distinctly to be consider'd.

First, What arguments natural reason doth furnish us withal, to persuade us of this principle, that our Souls are immortal, and that there is another state remains for men after this life.

Secondly, What assurance *de facto* the world had of this principle, before Christ's coming into the world: what the Heathens, and what the *Jews* had. The reason why I shall speak to these distinctly, is, because they are *two* very different enquiries; What assurance men might have had from the principles of natural reason concerning this matter, and what assurance they had *de facto*. I begin with the

First, What arguments natural reason doth furnish us withal to persuade us to this principle, that our Souls are immortal, and consequently that another State remains for men after this Life. And here I shall shew,

I. How much may be said for it.

II. How little can be said against it. But before I come to speak particularly to the arguments, which natural reason affords us for the proof of this principle, I shall premise certain general considerations, which may give light and force to the following arguments. As,

First, By the Soul we mean a part of man distinct from his body, or a principle in him which is not matter. I chuse rather to describe it this way, than by the essential properties of it, which are hard to fix upon, and are more remote from common apprehension. Our Saviour, when he would convince his Disciples after his Resurrection, that the body wherein he appeared to them was a real body, and that he was not a Spirit or Apparition, he bids them *touch and handle him*; for, says he, *a Spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me to have*. So that by the Soul or Spirit of a man, we mean some principle in man, which is really distinct from his visible and sensible part, from all that in man which affects our outward senses, and which is not to be described by any sensible and external qualities, such as we use to describe a body by: because it is supposed to be of such a nature, as does not fall under the cognizance and notice of any of our senses. And therefore I describe it, by removing from it all those qualities and properties which belong to that which falls under our senses, *viz.* That it is something in man distinct from his body, a principle in him which is not matter; that principle which is the cause of those several operations, which by inward sense and experience we are conscious to our selves of; such are Perception, Understanding, Memory, Will. So that the most plain and popular notion that we can have of the Soul, is, that it is something in us which we never saw, and which is the cause of those effects which we find in our selves; it is the principle whereby we are conscious to our selves, that we perceive such and such objects, that we see, or hear, or perceive any thing by any other sense; it is that whereby we think and remember, whereby we reason about any thing, and do freely chuse and refuse such things as are presented to us. These operations every one is conscious to himself of, and that which is the principle of these, or the cause from whence these proceed, is that which we mean by the Soul.

Secondly, By the Immortality of the Soul, I mean nothing else, but that it survives the body, that when the body dies and falls to the ground, yet this principle which we call the Soul, still remains and lives separate from it; that is, there

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is still a part of us which is free from the fate of the body, and continues to perform all those operations, to the performance of which the organs of the body are not necessary; that is, when our bodies are destitute of life, and become a dead carcase, there is still something that did belong to us, which retains the power of understanding, which thinks, and reasons, and remembers, and does all these freely.

Thirdly, That he that goes about to prove the Soul's immortality, supposeth the existence of a Deity, that there is a God. For altho' there be a very intimate and strict connexion between the two principles as to us, as being these two great pillars of all Religion; yet that which is first and most fundamental to all Religion, is the existence of a God; which if it be not first proved, the best arguments for the Soul's immortality lose their force. Therefore as to the present argument, I suppose the Being of God as a thing acknowledged, and not now to be proved; which I may the better do, having formerly endeavour'd to make good this grand principle of Religion, against the pretensions of the Atheists.

Fourthly, The existence of a God being supposed, this doth very much facilitate the other, of the Soul's immortality. For this being an essential property of the divine nature, that he is a Spirit, that is, something that is not matter; it being once granted that God is, thus much is gained, that there is such a thing as a Spirit, as an immaterial substance, that is not liable to die or perish; so that he that goes about to prove the immortality of the Soul, shall not need to prove that there may be such a thing as a Spirit, that the notion of an immaterial substance does not imply a contradiction; because, supposing that there is a God, who is essentially a Spirit, there can be no doubt of the possibility of such a thing as a Spirit; and tho' there be this difference between God and all other Spirits, that he is an infinite Spirit, whereas others are but finite; yet no man that grants the existence of an infinite Spirit, can with any pretence or colour of reason deny the possibility of a finite Spirit.

Fifthly, and *lastly*, It is highly reasonable that men should acquiesce and rest satisfied in such reasons and arguments for the proof of any thing, as the nature of the thing to be proved will bear; because there are several kinds and degrees of evidence, which all things are not equally capable of. It is sufficient that the evidence be such as the nature of the thing to be proved will admit of, and such as prudent men make no scruple to admit for sufficient evidence for things of the like nature, and such as, supposing the thing to be, we cannot ordinarily expect better, or greater evidence for it.

There are two kinds of evidences, which are the highest and most satisfactory that this world affords to us; and those are the evidence of sense, and mathematical demonstration. Now there are many things, concerning which the generality of men profess themselves to be well satisfied, which do not afford either of these kinds of evidence. There's none of us but doth firmly believe that we were born, tho' we do not remember any such thing; no man's memory does furnish him with the testimony of his senses for this matter, nor can any man prove this by a mathematical demonstration, nor by any necessary argument, so as to shew it impossible that the thing should be otherwise. For it is possible that a man may come into the world otherwise, than by the ordinary course of generation, as the first man did, who was created immediately by God, and yet I know no man in the world who doubts in the least concerning this matter, tho' he have no other argument for it, but the testimony of others, and his own observation, how other Persons like himself came into the world. And 'tis reasonable to acquiesce in this evidence, because the nature of the thing affords no greater. We who never were at *Jerusalem*, do firmly believe that there is such a place, upon the testimony and relation of others: and no man is blamed for this, as being over-credulous; because no man, that will not take the pains to go thither, can have any other greater evidence of it, than the general testimony of those who say they have seen it. And indeed almost all human affairs, I am sure the most important, are governed and conducted by such evidence, as falls very much short both of the evidence of sense, and of mathematical demonstration.

To apply this then to my present purpose. That the Soul of Man is of an immortal nature, is not capable of all kinds and degrees of evidence. It cannot be

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proved by our senses, nor is it reasonable to expect it should be so proved; because the Soul is supposed, by every one that discourseth of it, to be a thing of such a nature, as cannot be seen or handled, or fall under any other of our Senses: nor can it be proved to us by our own experience, while we are in this world; because whoever dies, which is the only trial that can be made whether our souls remain after our bodies, goes out of this world. As for mathematical demonstration, the nature of the thing renders it incapable of it. It remains then, that we rest contented with such arguments as the nature of the thing will bear, and with such evidence as men are contented to accept of, and do account sufficient in other matters; such evidence as a prudent considering man, who is not credulous on the one hand, and on the other is not prejudiced by any Interest against it, would rest satisfied in.

Having premised these general considerations, to clear my way, I now come to speak to the particular arguments, whereby the Immortality of the Soul may be made out to our reason. And the best way to estimate the force of the arguments which I shall bring for it, will be to consider before-hand with our selves, what evidence we can in reason expect for a thing of this nature. Suppose our Souls be immortal; by what kind of arguments could we desire to be assured of it? Setting aside miracles and divine revelation, could we desire more than this?

I. That the thing be a natural notion and dictate of our minds.

II. That it doth not contradict any other principle that nature hath planted in us, but does very well accord and agree with all other the most natural notions of our minds.

III. That it be suitable to our natural fears and hopes.

IV. That it tends to the happiness of man, and the good order and government of the world.

V. That it gives the most rational account of all those inward actions, which we are conscious to our selves of, as perception, understanding, memory, will, which we cannot without great unreasonableness ascribe to matter, as the cause of them. If all these be thus, as I shall endeavour to make it appear they are, what greater satisfaction could we desire to have of the Immortality of our Souls, than these arguments give us? I do not say that any one of these arguments doth sufficiently conclude this thing; nor is it necessary, that taken singly and by themselves they should do it; it is sufficient that they concur to make up one entire argument, which may be a sufficient evidence of the Soul's Immortality. To illustrate this by an instance: Suppose a Man should use these *two* arguments, to prove that such a man deserves to be credited in such a relation. *First*, because he had sufficient knowledge of the thing he relates; and, *Secondly*, because he is a man of integrity and fidelity. Neither of these alone would prove the man to be worthy of credit; tho' both together make up a good argument. So 'tis in these arguments which I have produc'd; it may be, no one of them is a sufficient inducement, taken singly and by itself, to satisfy a man fully that the Soul is immortal; and yet they may concur together to make a very powerful argument. I begin with the

I. That our Souls are of an immortal nature, that they do not die and perish with our bodies, but pass into another state upon the dissolution of our bodies, is a natural notion and dictate of our minds. That I call a natural notion, which the minds of all men do naturally hit upon and agree in, notwithstanding the distance and remoteness of the several parts of the world from one another, notwithstanding the different tempers, and manner and ways of education. The only way to measure whether any thing be natural or not, is by enquiring whether it agree to the whole kind or not: if it do, then we call it natural. *Omnium consensus naturæ vox est, The consent of all is the voice of nature*, says Tully, speaking of the universal agreement of all nations in this apprehension, that *the Souls of men remain after their bodies*. And this he tells us he looks upon as a very great argument, *maximum verè argumentum est, naturam ipsam de immortalitate animarum tacitam judicare, quod omnibus curæ sint, & maxime quidem, quæ post mortem futura sunt*: This is a very great argument that nature doth secretly, and in mens silent thoughts determine the Immortality of the Soul, that all men are solicitous of what shall become of them after death. *Nescio quomodo inhaeret in mentibus quasi seculorum*

culorum quoddam augurium futurorum, idque in maximis ingeniis altissimisque animis & existit maxime & apparet facillime: I know not how (saith he) there sticks in the mind a certain kind of presage of a future State, and this is most deeply fix'd and discovers it self soonest in the choicest Spirit. Again the same Author, *Ut deos esse natura opinamur, sic permanere animos arbitramur consensu nationum omnium: As this Opinion is planted in us by nature, that there is a God, by the consent of all nations we believe that souls remain after the body.* I might multiply testimonies to this purpose out of the antient heathen writers; but these which I have produced out of this great author, are so plain and express, that I need bring no other.

As for those barbarous nations which have been discovered in these latter ages of the world, and which before the first planting of *America*, were never known to have held correspondence with these parts of the world, yet all those nations agree in this principle, of the Immortality of the Soul; nay, even the most barbarous of those nations, those who are most inhumane and eat one another, those of *Toupinamboult* in *Brasile*, who are said by some authors, but I think not upon sufficient grounds, not to acknowledge the Being of a God; yet even these (as *Lerius* tells us, who lived among them) had a very fix'd and firm persuasion of this principle of religion, the Immortality of the Soul. *There is not, says he, any nation in the world more remote from all religion than these were; yet to shew that there is some light in the midst of this darkness, I can, says he, truly affirm, that they have not only some apprehensions of the Immortality of the Soul, but a most confident persuasion of it. Their opinion, says he, is, that the Souls of stout and valiant men after death fly beyond the highest mountains, and there are gathered to their fathers and grand-fathers, and live in pleasant gardens, with all manner of delights; but the Souls of slothful and unactive men, and those who do nothing for their country, are carried to Aygman (so they call the Devil) and live with him in perpetual torments.* The like *Xaverius* and others, who laboured in the conversion of the remote parts of the *East-Indies*, tell us concerning those nations, that they found them generally possess'd with this principle, of the Soul's Immortality.

Now what will we call a natural notion, if not that which mankind in all places of the world, in all ages, so far as history informs, did universally agree in? What evidence greater than this can any man give, to shew that any thing is natural? And if we believe a God, (which I told you I do all along in this argument suppose to be already proved) can we imagine that this wise and good God would plant such a notion and apprehension in the understandings of men, as would put an universal cheat and delusion upon human nature?

And that the universal consent of all nations in this principle, cannot be resolved either into the fears and groundless jealousy and superstition of human nature, nor into universal tradition, which had its original from some impostor, nor into reason and policy of state, I might shew particularly: but having formerly done that, concerning the universal consent of all nations in the belief of a God, and the reason being the very same, as to this principle of the Immortality of the Soul, I shall not need to do this over again upon this argument.

And that some persons, and particular sects in the world, have disowned this principle, is no sufficient objection against it. It cannot be denied, but the *Epicureans* among the philosophers did renounce this principle; and some also among the *Stoicks* do speak doubtfully of it. The *Saducees* likewise among the *Jews* fell into this Error, upon a mistake and misapprehension of the doctrine of their master *Sadoc*, who, as *Josephus* tells us, did use to inculcate this principle to his scholars, that tho' there were no rewards nor punishments after this life, yet men ought to be good and live virtuously; from whence in process of time, by heat of opposition against the *Pharisees*, who brought in oral tradition, and made it equal with the written word of God, they fell into that error, and denied the Soul's Immortality, not finding such clear texts for it in the old testament, as to them did seem fully convincing of this truth. *Xaverius* likewise tells us, that among the several sects of religion which he found in *Japan*, there was one which denied the Immortality of the Soul, and that there were any Spirits: but he says they were a sort of notoriously wicked and vicious persons.

To these Instances, which are so few, and bear no proportion to the generality of mankind, I have these two things to say.

1. That no argument can be drawn *à monstro ad naturam*. A thing may be natural, and yet some instances may be brought to the contrary: but these are but few in comparison, and like *monsters*, which are no argument against nature. No man will deny that it is natural for men to have two eyes, and five fingers upon a hand; tho' there are several instances of men born but with one eye, and with four or six fingers.

2. But especially in matters of religion and discourse, which are subject to liberty, men may offer violence to nature, and to gratify their lusts and interests, may by false reasonings debauch their understanding, and by long striving against the natural bent and byas of it, may alter their apprehensions of things, and persuade others to the same: but nothing that is against nature can prevail very far, but nature will still be endeavouring to recover itself, and to free it self from the violence which is offer'd to it. So that mens understandings left to themselves, and not having some false byas put upon them, out of a design of pride and singularity in opinion, which was the case of *Epicurus*; or out of the interest of some lust, and a design to set men at liberty to sin, which is the case of most who have renounced this principle; I say, nothing but one of these two can ordinarily make men deny the Immortality of the Soul. Thus I have done with the *first* argument, namely, that the Immortality of the Soul is a natural notion and dictate of our minds.

S E R M O N CXXI.

Of the Immortality of the Soul, as discovered by Nature, and by Revelation.

2 T I M. i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished Death, and hath brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.

The second
Sermon on
this Text.

I Proceed to the *second* argument, that this notion or principle of the Immortality of the Soul, doth not contradict any other principle that nature hath planted in us, but doth very well accord and agree with all those other notions which are most natural. I shall mention *two*, which seem to be the most natural notions that we have, and the most deeply rooted in our natures; the one is the existence and the perfections of God; and the other the difference of good and evil. Mankind do universally agree in these *two* principles, that there is a God who is essentially good and just; and that there is a real difference between good and evil, which is not founded in the opinion and imagination of persons, or in the custom and usage of the world, but in the nature of things. Now this principle of the Immortality of the Soul, and future rewards after this life, is so far from clashing with either of these principles, that the contrary assertion, *viz.* that our Souls are mortal, and that there is nothing to be hoped for, or feared beyond this life, would very much contradict those other principles. To shew this then particularly,

1. The Immortality of the Soul is very agreeable to the natural notion which we have of God, one part whereof is, that he is essentially good and just.

(1.) For his goodness. It is very agreeable to *that*, to think that God would make some creatures for as long a duration as they are capable of. The wisdom of God hath chosen to display it self, in creating variety of things of different degrees and perfections; things devoid of life and sense; and several degrees and orders of sensitive creatures, of different shapes and figures, of different magnitude, some vastly great, others extremely little, others of middle sort between these. And himself being a pure Spirit, we have no reason to doubt, but he could make

creatures of a spiritual nature, and such as should have no principle of self-corruption in them. And seeing he could make creatures of such perfection, if we believe him to be essentially good, we have no reason to doubt, but that he hath done so. For it is the very nature of goodness, to communicate and diffuse it self, and to delight in doing so; and we cannot imagine, but that the same goodness which prompted and inclined him to give being to those creatures which are of an inferior degree of perfection, would move him likewise to make creatures more perfect, and capable of greater degrees of happiness, and of a longer enjoyment of it, if it were in his power to make such; and no man that believes the omnipotency of God can doubt of this. For he who by a pure act of his will can command things to be, and in an instant to start out of nothing, can as easily make one sort of creatures as another. Now the power of God being supposed, his goodness secures us of his will: for we cannot imagine any such thing as envy in a Being which we suppose to be perfectly good; nothing being more inconsistent with perfect goodness, than to be unwilling to communicate happiness to others, and to grudge that others should partake of it.

Now this being supposed, that God could and would make creatures of a spiritual and immortal nature, and the utmost imaginable perfections of such creatures being knowledge and liberty, wherever these perfections are found, we have reason to conclude that creature to be endowed with a principle that is of a spiritual and immortal nature. Now these perfections of understanding and will being found in man, this argues him to be endowed with such a principle, as is in his own nature capable of an immortal duration.

'Tis true indeed, this spiritual part of man, which we call his Soul, is united to a visible and material part, viz. his Body; the union of which parts constitutes a peculiar sort of creature, which is *utriusque mundi nexus*, unites the material and immaterial world, the world of matter and of spirits. And as it is very suitable to the wisdom of God, which delights in variety, that there should be a sort of creatures compounded of both these principles, matter and spirit; so it is very agreeable to his goodness to think that he would design such creatures for as long a duration and continuance as they were capable of. For as it is the effects of goodness to bring creatures forth into the possession of that life and happiness which they are capable of; so to continue them in the enjoyment of it for so long as they are capable.

The sum of all this is, that as it is agreeable to the wisdom of God, which made the world, to display it self in all variety of creatures; so it is agreeable to his goodness, to make some of as perfect a kind as creatures are capable of being. Now it being no repugnancy nor contradiction, that a creature should be of a spiritual and immortal nature, we have no reason to think, but that the fruitfulness of the divine goodness hath brought forth such creatures; and if there be reason to conclude any thing to be of a spiritual and immortal nature, certainly the principle of understanding and liberty, which we are conscious of in our selves, deserves to be reputed such.

(2.) It is very agreeable to the justice of God, to think the Souls of men remain after this life, that there may be a state of reward and recompense in another world. If we believe God to be holy and just, we cannot but believe that he loves righteousness and goodness, and hates iniquity; and that as he is governor and publick magistrate of the world, he is concerned to countenance and encourage the one, and to discountenance and discourage the other. Now the providences of God being in a great measure promiscuously administer'd in this world, so that no man can make any certain judgment of God's love and hatred towards persons by what befalls them in this world, it being the lot of good men many times to suffer and be afflicted, and of wicked men to live in a flourishing and prosperous condition; I say, things being thus, it is very agreeable to those notions which we have of the divine holiness and justice, to believe that there will a time come, when this wise and just governor of the world will make a wide and visible difference between the righteous and the wicked; so that tho' for a while the justice of God may be clouded, yet there will a time come when it shall be clearly manifested, and every eye see it and bear witness to it; when judgment shall break forth as the light, and righteousness as the noon-day. It is possible that

that sin for a while may go unpunish'd, nay, triumph and prosper; and that virtue and innocence may not only be unrewarded, but oppress'd and despised, and persecuted. And this may be reconcileable enough to the wisdom of God's providence, and the justice of it, supposing the Immortality of the Soul, and another state after this life, wherein all things shall be set strait, and every man shall receive according to his works: but unless this be supposed, it is impossible to solve the justice of God's providence. Who will believe that the affairs of the world are administer'd by him who loves righteousness, and hates all the workers of iniquity, who will not let the least service that is done to him pass unrewarded, nor on the other hand acquit the guilty, and let sin go unpunish'd, which are the properties of justice; I say, who will believe this, that looks into the course of the world, and sees with how little difference and distinction of good and bad, the affairs of it are manag'd? That sees virtue discountenanced and despised, poor and destitute, afflicted and tormented; when wickedness is many times exalted to high places, and makes a great noise and ruffle in the world? He that considers what a hazard many times good men run, how for goodness sake they venture, and many times quit all the contentments and enjoyments of this life, and submit to the greatest sufferings and calamities that human nature is capable of; while in the mean time prosperity is poured into the lap of the wicked, and heaven seems to look pleasantly upon those that deal treacherously, and to be silent whilst the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than himself; he that considers this, and can without supposing another life after this, pretend to vindicate the justice of these things, must be as blind as the fortune that governs them. Would not this be a perpetual stain and blemish upon the divine providence, that *Abel* who offer'd up a better sacrifice than *Cain*, and had this testimony, that he pleased God; yet after all this, should have no other reward for it, but to be slain by his brother, who had offended God by a slight and contemptuous offering? If there were no reward to be expected after this life, would not this have been a sad example to the world, to see one of the first men that served God acceptably, thus rewarded? What a pitiful encouragement would it be to men to be good, to see profane *Esau* blest with the dew of heaven, and fatness of the earth; and to hear good old *Jacob* in the end and conclusion of his days, to complain, *few and evil have the days of my pilgrimage been*? If this had been the end of *Esau* and *Jacob*, it would puzzle all the wit and reason of mankind to wipe off this reproach from the providence of God, and vindicate the justice of it. And therefore I do not wonder, that the greatest wits among the heathen philosophers, were so much puzzled with this objection against the providence of God; If the wise, and just, and good God do administer the affairs of the world, and be concerned in the good or bad actions of men, *cur bonis male & malis bene*? How comes it to pass, that good men many times are miserable, and bad men so happy in the world? And they had no other way to wipe off this objection, but by referring these things to another world, wherein the temporal sufferings of good men should be eternally rewarded, and the short and transient happiness of wicked men should be rendered insignificant, and drowned in an eternity of misery.

So that if we believe the being of God, and the providence of God; (which I do all along take for granted in this argument) there's no other way imaginable to solve the equity and justice of God's providence, but upon this supposition, that there is another life after this. For to say, that virtue is a sufficient and abundant reward for it self, tho' it have some truth in it, if we set aside those sufferings, and miseries, and calamities, which virtue is frequently attended with in this life; yet if these be taken in, it is but a very jejune and dry speculation. For considering the strong propension and inclination of human nature to avoid these evils and inconveniencies, a state of virtue attended with great sufferings, would be so far from being a happiness, that it would be a real misery; so that the determination of the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 19. is according to nature, and the truth and reason of things, that, *If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men most miserable*. For although it be true, that as things now stand, and as the nature of man is framed, good men do find a strange kind of inward pleasure and secret satisfaction of mind in the discharge of their duty, and doing what is virtuous; yet every man that looks into himself and consults his own breast, will find that this

delight and contentment springs chiefly from the hopes which men conceive, that a holy and virtuous life shall not be unrewarded: and without these hopes virtue is but a dead and empty name; and notwithstanding the reasonableness of virtuous actions compar'd with the contrary of them, yet when virtue came to be incumber'd with difficulties, and to be attended with such sufferings and inconveniences, as were grievous and intolerable to human nature, then it would appear unreasonable to chuse that for a happiness, which would rob a man of all the felicity of his life. For tho' a man were never so much in love with virtue for the native beauty and comeliness of it; yet it would strangely cool his affection to it, to consider that he should be undone by the match, that when he had it, he must go a begging with it, and be in danger of death, for the sake of that which he had chosen for the felicity of his life. So that how devout soever the woman might be, yet I dare say she was not over-wise and considerate, who going about with a pitcher of water in one hand, and a pan of coals in the other, and being asked what she intended to do with them, answer'd; "That she intended with the one "to burn up heaven, and with the other to quench hell, that men might love God "and virtue for their own sakes, without hope of reward or fear of punishment."

And the consequence of this dry doctrine, does sufficiently appear in the sect of the *Saducees*, which had its rise from this principle of *Sadec*, the master of the sect, who out of an indiscreet zeal to teach something above others, and indeed above the pitch of human nature, inculcated this doctrine upon his scholars, that religion and virtue ought to be loved for themselves, tho' there were no reward of virtue to be hoped, nor punishment of vice to be feared in another world; from which his disciples inferred, that it was not necessary to religion to believe a future state, and in process of time, peremptorily maintain'd that there was no life after this. For they did not only deny the resurrection of the body, but, as *St Paul* tells us, they said, that *there was neither Angel nor Spirit*; that is, they denied that there was any thing of an immortal nature, that did remain after this life. And what the consequence of this was, we may see in the character which *Josephus* gives of that sect; for he tells, that the commonalty of the *Jews* were of the sect of the *Pharisees*, but most of the great and rich men were *Saducees*; which plainly shews that this dry speculation of loving religion and virtue for themselves, without any expectation of future rewards, did end in their giving over all serious pursuit of religion; and because they hoped for nothing after this life, therefore laying aside all other considerations, they applied themselves to the present business of this life, and grasp'd as much of the present enjoyments of its power and riches, as they could by any means attain to.

And for a farther evidence of this, that it is only or principally the hopes of a future happiness that bear men up in the pursuit of virtue, that give them so much comfort and satisfaction in the prosecution of it, and make men encounter the difficulties, and oppositions, and persecutions they meet withal in the ways of religion, with so much undauntedness and courage; I say, for the farther evidence of this, I shall only offer this consideration, that according to the degree of this hope and assurance of another life, mens constancy and courage in the ways of virtue and religion have been. Before Christ's coming into the world, and *the bringing of Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel*, we do not find in all ages of the world, so many instances of patience and constant suffering for religion, as happen'd in the first age after Christ. God did not think fit to try the world so much in this kind, till they were furnish'd with a principle which would bear them up under the greatest sufferings, which was nothing else but the full assurance which the Gospel gave the world of a blessed Immortality after this life; the firm belief and persuasion of which, made Christians dead to the world, and all the contentments and enjoyments of it, and by raising them above all the pleasures and terrors of sense, made them to despise present things, *in hopes of eternal Life, which God that could not lye had promised*. This was that which set them above the fears of death, so that they were not to be frighted out of their religion by the most exquisite torments, and all the most horrid and fearful shapes that the malice of men and devils could dress up misery and affliction in. Whereas under the old dispensation of the law, before the revelation of the Gospel, when the promises of eternal life were not so clear, and mens hopes of it more weak and faint,

faint, the exprefs encouragement to obedience was founded in the promifes of temporal bleffings; God herein complying with the neceffity of human nature, which is not to be wrought upon to any great purpofe, but by arguments of advantage.

The fum of this argument, which I have thus largely dilated upon, becaufe I look upon it as one of the moft ftrong and convincing of the Soul's Immortality, is this That the Juftice of God's providence cannot fufficiently be vindicated, but upon the fupposal of this principle of the Soul's Immortality: whereas if this principle be admitted, that men pafs out of this life into an eternal ftate of happinefs or mifery, according as they have behaved themfelves in this world: then the account of the unequal providences of God in this world is eafy. For if we look upon this life as a ftate of probation, of trial to wicked men, and of exercife to good men in order to a future and eternal ftate; and if we confider withal, how vaft the difference is between time and eternity, it will be eafy then to apprehend how all things may be fet ftrait in another world, and how the righteoufnefs of God may appear, in giving an abundant recompence to good men for all their temporal fervice and fufferings, which do but prepare them the more for a quicker relifh of the glory and happinefs which is referved for them; and on the other hand, in punifhing wicked men, whose fhort eafe and profperity in this world will, by the juft judgment of God for their abufe of the bleffings of this life, fet out their mifery and torment to the greateft difadvantage. For as nothing commends happinefs more than precedent forrow; fo nothing makes pain and fuffering more bitter and intolerable, than to ftep into them out of a ftate of eafe and pleafure; fo that the pleafures and profperity of wicked men in this life, confider'd with the punifhment of the next, which will follow upon them, is an addition to their mifery. This is the very ftting of the fecond death; and in this fenfe alfo that of the wife man is true, *The eafe of the fimple will flay them, and the profperity of thefe fools fhall be the great aggravation of their deftruction.*

2. Another notion which is deeply rooted in the nature of man, is, that there is a difference between good and evil, which is not founded in the imagination of perfons or in the cuftom and uſage of the world, but in the nature of things; that there are ſome things which have a natural evil, and turpitude, and deformity in them; for example, impiety and prophaneneſs towards God, juſtice and unrighteouſneſs towards men, perfidiouſneſs, injury, ingratitude, theſe are things that are not only condemned by the poſitive laws and conſtitutions of particular nations and governments, but by the general verdict and ſentiments of humanity. Piety and religion towards God, juſtice, and righteouſneſs, and fidelity and reverence of oaths, regard to a man's word and promiſe, and gratitude towards thoſe who have oblig'd us; theſe and the like qualities, which we call virtues, are not only well ſpoken of, where they are countenanced by the authority of law, but have the tacit approbation and veneration of mankind: And any man that thinks that theſe things are not naturally and in themſelves good, but are merely arbitrary, and depend upon the pleaſure of authority, and the will of thoſe who have the power of impoſing laws upon others; I ſay, any ſuch perſon may eaſily be convinc'd of his error, by putting this ſuppoſition: Suppoſe wickedneſs were eſtabliſh'd by a law, and the practice of fraud, and rapine, and perjury, falſeneſs in a man's word and promiſes, were commended and rewarded; and it were made a crime for any man to be honeſt, to have any regard to his oath or promiſe, and the man that ſhould dare to be honeſt or make good his word, ſhould be ſeverely puniſh'd, and made a publick example; I ſay, ſuppoſe the reverſe of all that which we now call virtue, were ſolemnly enacted by a law, and publick authority ſhould enjoin the practice of that which we call vice; what would the conſequence of this be, when the tables were thus turned? Would that which we now call vice, gain the eſteem and reputation of virtue; and thoſe things which we now call virtue, grow contemptible and become odious to human nature? If not, then there is a natural and intrinſical difference between good and evil, between virtue and vice; there is ſomething in the nature of theſe things which does not depend upon arbitrary conſtitution. And I think nothing can be more evident, than that the authority which ſhould attempt ſuch an eſtabliſhment, would thereby be render'd ridiculous, and all laws of ſuch a tendency as this, would be hiſs'd

out of the world. And the reason of this is plain, because no government could subsist upon these terms: for the very forbidding men to be just and honest, the enjoining of fraud, and violence, and perjury, and breach of trust, would apparently destroy the end of government, which is to preserve men and their rights against the encroachments and inconveniencies of these: and this end being destroyed, human society would presently disband, and men would naturally fall into a state of war: which plainly shews that there is a natural, and immutable, and eternal reason for that which we call goodness and virtue; and against that which we call vice and wickedness.

To come then to my purpose, it is very agreeable to this natural notion of the difference between good and evil, to believe the Soul's Immortality. For nothing is more reasonable to imagine, than that good and evil, as they are differenced in their nature, so they shall be in their rewards; that it shall one time or other be well to them that do well, and evil to the wicked man. Now seeing this difference is not made in this world, but all things happen alike to all, the belief of this difference between good and evil, and the different rewards belonging to them, infers another state after this life, which is the very thing we mean by the Soul's Immortality, namely, that it does not die with the body, but remains after it, and passeth into a state wherein it shall receive a reward suitable to the actions of this life.

And thus I have done with the *Second* argument for the Soul's Immortality, namely, that this principle doth not contradict those other principles which nature hath planted in us, but doth very well accord and agree with those natural notions which we have of the goodness of God, and of the justice of his providence, and of the real and intrinsical difference between good and evil.

III. This principle of the Soul's Immortality, is suitable to the natural hopes and fears of men.

To the natural hopes of men. Whence is it that men are so desirous to purchase a lasting fame, and to perpetuate their memory to posterity, but that they hope that there's something belonging to them, which shall survive the fate of the body, and when that lies in the silent grave, shall be sensible of the honour which is done to their memory, and shall enjoy the pleasure of the just and impartial Fame, which shall speak of them to posterity without envy or flattery? And this is a thing incident to the greatest and most generous spirits; none so apt as they to feed themselves with these hopes of Immortality. What was it made those great Spirits among the *Romans* so freely to sacrifice their lives for the safety of their country, but an ambition that their names might live after them, and be mention'd with honour when they were dead and gone? Which ambition of theirs, had it not been grounded in the hopes of Immortality, and a natural opinion of another life after this, in which they might enjoy the delight and satisfaction of the fame which they had purchased, nothing could have been more vain and unreasonable. If there were no hopes of a life beyond this, what is there in fame that should tempt any man to forego this present life, with all the contentments and enjoyments of it? What is the pleasure of being well spoken of, when a man is not? What is the happiness which men can promise to themselves, when they are out of being, when they can enjoy nothing, nor be sensible of any thing, because they are not? So that the spring of all those brave and gallant actions, which the Heathens did with the hazard of their lives, out of a desire of after-fame and glory; I say, the spring of all those actions, could be no other than the hopes of another life after this, in which they made account to enjoy the pleasure of the fame, which they purchased with the expence and loss of this present life.

But this ardent desire and impatient thirst after fame, concerns but a few of mankind in comparison. I shall therefore instance in something which is more common and general to mankind, which plainly argues this hope of Immortality. What is the ground of that peace, and quiet, and satisfaction, which good men find in good and virtuous actions, but that they have a secret persuasion and comfortable hopes that they shall some time or other be rewarded? And we find that they maintain these even when they despair of any reward in this world. Now what do these hopes argue, but a secret belief of a future state, and another life after this, wherein men shall receive the reward of their actions, and inherit the fruit

fruit of their doings? Whence is it else; that good men, tho' they find that goodness suffers, and is persecuted in this world, and that the best designs are many times unsuccessful; what is it that bears them up under these disappointments; and makes them constant in a virtuous course, but this hope of another life, in a better state of things hereafter? They have some secret presage in their own minds of a life after death, which will be a time of recompense, as this is of trial.

2. The same may be argued from the natural fears of men. Whence is the secret shame, and fear, and horror, which seizeth upon the minds of men, when they are about a wicked action; yea, though no eye see them, and though what they are doing do not fall under the cognizance of any human court or tribunal? Whence is it that they meet with such checks and rebukes in their own spirits, and feel such a disturbance and confusion in their minds, when they do a vile and unworthy thing; yea, although it be so secretly contrived and so privately managed, that no man can charge them with it, or call them to account for it? What art thou afraid of, man, if there be no life after this? Why do thy joints tremble, and thy knees knock together, if thou be'st in no danger from any thing in this world, and hast no fears of the other? If men had not a natural dread of another world, and sad and dreadful presages of future vengeance, why do not men sin with assurance when no eye sees them? Why are not men secure, when they have only imagined a mischief privately in their own hearts, and no creature is privy and conscious to it? Why do mens own consciences lash and sting them for these things, which they might do with as great impunity from men in this world, as the most virtuous actions? Whence is it that *cogitare, peccare est*, as *Min. Felix* expresseth it, *& non solum conscios timent, sed & conscientiam*? Whence it is that a wicked man is guilty upon account merely of his thoughts, and is not only fearful because of those things which others are conscious of, but because of those things which no body knows but his own conscience? Whence is it that,

Scelus intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum;

Facti crimen habet?

That he that does but devise and imagine secret mischief in his heart, is guilty to himself, as if the fact had been committed? And when no man can charge and accuse him for it, yet,

Nocte dieque suum gestat in pectore testem:

He carries his accuser in his breast, who does night and day incessantly witness against him?

And that these fears are natural, the sudden rise of them is a good evidence. They do not proceed from deliberation, men do not reason themselves into these fears, but they spring up in mens minds they know not how; which shews that they are natural. Now a man's natural actions, I mean, such as surprize us, and do not proceed from deliberation, are better arguments of the intimate sense of our minds, and do more truly discover the bottom of our hearts, and those notions that are implanted in our natures, than those actions which are governed by reason and discourse, and proceed from deliberation. To demonstrate this by an instance; if a man upon a sudden sight of a snake, do recoil and start back, tremble and grow pale; this is a better argument of a natural antipathy and fear, than it is of a natural courage, if afterward, when he hath commanded down his fear, he should by his reason persuade himself to take up the snake into his hand. If you would know what a man's natural apprehensions are, take him on the sudden, and give him no time to deliberate. Therefore some cunning politicians have used this way of surprize and sudden questions, to dive into the hearts of men, and discover their secrets.

In like manner, if you would know what mens natural apprehensions are concerning the Immortality of the Soul, and a future state, observe what men's first thoughts are, whether a man's conscience does not suggest to him such fears upon the commission of sin. There's no doubt but men may offer violence to their natures, and reason themselves into great doubts about the Soul's Immortality: nay men may be bribed into the contrary opinion: but this man who in his deliberate discourses denies any reward after this life, shall by his natural actions acknowledge them, by those fears and terrors, which his guilty conscience is ever and anon surprized withal.

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The Sum of this argument is, that it is natural for men that live piously and virtuously, that do just and honest and worthy actions, to conceive good hopes that it shall some time or other be well with them; that however they may meet with no reward and recompence in this world, yet *verily there will be a reward for the righteous*: and on the other hand, wicked men, tho' they flourish and prosper in their wickedness, yet they are not free from guilt, they are fearful and timorous, even when their condition sets them above the fear of any man upon earth. Now what does this signify, but that they have some secret presages of an after-punishment? Nature suggests this thought to them, that there will be a time when all the sins which they have committed, and the wickedness which they have done, shall be accounted for.

And 'tis no prejudice to this truth, that some men sin against their consciences, and by frequent acts of sin, and offering notorious violence to their own light, bring themselves into a brawny and insensible condition, so that they have not those stings and lashes, are not haunted with those fears and terrors which pursue common sinners. This is but reasonable to be expected, that men by frequent acts of sin, should lose the tender sense which mens consciences naturally have of good and evil; that men that lay waste their consciences by gross and notorious sins, should lose the sense of good and evil, and that their consciences should grow hard like a beaten road; nay, it is suitable to the justice of God, to give up such persons to a reprobate sense, to an injudicious mind, that they who would not be awaken'd and reclaim'd by the natural fear of divine justice, which God hath hid in every man's conscience, should at last lose all sense and apprehension of these things, and be permitted securely and without remorse to perfect their own ruin.

IV. This doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, does evidently tend to the happiness and perfection of man, and to the good order and government of the world: to the happiness and perfection of man, both consider'd singly, and in society.

I. To the happiness and perfection of man, consider'd in his single capacity, If it be a thing desirable *to be* at all, then it is a thing desirable to be continued in *being* as long as may be, and for ever if it be possible. If life be a perfection, then eternal life is much more so; especially if the circumstances of this present life be consider'd, together with the state which we hope for hereafter. The condition of men in this present life, is attended with so many frailties, liable to so great miseries and sufferings, to so many pains and diseases, to such various causes of sorrow and trouble, of fear and vexation, by reason of the many hazards and uncertainties, which not only the comforts and contentments of our lives, but even life it self is liable to, that the pleasure and happiness of it is by these very much rebated; so that were not men trained on with the hopes of something better hereafter, life it self would to many men be an insupportable burden: if men were not supported and born up under the anxieties of this present life, with the hopes and expectations of a happier state in another world, mankind would be the most imperfect and unhappy part of God's creation. For altho' other creatures be subjected to a great deal of vanity and misery, yet they have this happiness, that as they are made for a short duration and continuance, so they are only affected with the present, they do not fret and discontent themselves about the future, they are not liable to be cheated with hopes, nor tormented with fears, nor vex'd at disappointments, as the sons of men are.

But if our Souls be immortal, this makes abundant amends and compensation for the frailties of this life, and all the transitory sufferings and inconveniences of this present state; human nature, considered with this advantage, is infinitely above *the brute beasts that perish*.

As for those torments and miseries which we are liable to in another world, far greater than any thing that men suffer in this life, this ought not in reason to be objected against the Immortality of the Soul, as if this doctrine did not tend to the happiness and perfection of man: for if this be truly the case of mankind, that God hath made mens Souls of an immortal nature, and design'd them for a perpetual duration and continuance in another state after this life, in order to which state he hath placed every man in this world, to be as it were a candidate for eternity, he hath furnish'd every man with such helps and advantages, such op-

portunities

portunities and means for the attaining of everlasting happiness, that if he be not grossly wanting to himself, he shall not miscarry; if this be the case, then an immortal nature is a real and mighty privilege. If God puts every man into a capacity of happiness, and if no man becomes miserable but by his own choice, if no man falls short of eternal happiness but by his own fault, then Immortality is a privilege in itself, and a curse to none but those who make it so to themselves.

2. This doctrine tends to the happiness of man considered in society, to the good order and government of the world. I do not deny, but if this principle of the Immortality of the Soul were not believed in the world; if the generality of mankind had no regard to any thing beyond this present life: I say, I do not deny notwithstanding this, but there would be some kind of government kept up in the world; the necessities of human nature, and the mischiefs of contention would compel men to some kind of order: but I say withal, that if this principle were banish'd out of the world, government would want its most firm basis and foundation; there would be infinitely more disorders in the world, were men not restrained from injustice and violence by principles of conscience, and the awe of another world. And that this is so, is evident from hence, that all magistrates think themselves concern'd to cherish religion, and to maintain in the minds of men the belief of a God, and of a future state.

This is the *fourth* argument, that this doctrine does evidently tend to the happiness of man, and the good order and government of the world. I grant, that this argument alone, and taken singly by itself, is far from enforcing and necessarily concluding the Soul's Immortality: but if the other arguments be of force to conclude, this added to them is a very proper inducement to persuade and incline men to the belief of this principle; it does very well serve the purpose for which I bring it, namely, to shew that if there be good arguments for it, no man hath reason to be averse or backward to the belief of it; if by other arguments we be convinced of the suitableness of this principle to reason, this consideration will satisfy us, that it is not against our interest to entertain it. And no man that is not resolved to live wickedly, hath reason to desire that the contrary should be true. For what would a man gain by it, if the Soul were not immortal, but to level himself with *the beasts that perish*, and to put himself into a worse and more miserable condition than any of the creatures below him?

S E R M O N CXXII.

Of the Immortality of the Soul, as discovered by
Nature, and by Revelation.

2 TIM. i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ; who hath abolished Death, and hath brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel. The third Sermon on this Text.

THE *fifth* and last argument is, That this supposition of the Soul's Immortality, gives the fairest account and easiest solution of the Phænomena of human nature, of those several actions and operations which we are conscious to our selves of, and which, without great violence to our reason, cannot be resolved into a bodily principle, and ascribed to mere matter; such are perception, memory, liberty, and the several acts of understanding and reason. These operations we find in our selves, and we cannot imagine how they should be performed by mere matter; therefore we ought in all reason to resolve them into some principle of another nature from matter, that is, into something that is immaterial, and consequently immortal, that is incapable in its own nature of corruption and dissolution.

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And that the force of this argument may the better appear, I shall speak something of these distinctly, and shew that none of these operations can be performed from mere matter. I begin with the

1. And lowest, which is sensitive perception, which is nothing else but a consciousness to our selves of our own sensations, an apprehension of the impressions which are made upon us; and this faculty is that which constitutes the difference between sensitive and insensitive creatures. A stone may have several impressions made upon it, as well as the living creature endowed with sense; but with this difference, that whatever impressions are made upon a stone, by knocking, cutting or any other kind of motion or action, the stone is stupid, and is not in the least conscious of any of those impressions, does not perceive what is done to it; whereas those creatures which are endowed with sense, do plainly perceive their own and other motions, they are affected with the impressions made upon them.

Now we can give no account of this operation from mere matter. It is plain, that matter is not in its own nature sensible: for we find the greatest part of the world to consist of insensible parts, and such as have no perception. Now if matter be granted in itself to be insensible, it is utterly unimaginable, how any motion or configuration of the parts of it, should raise that which hath no sense to a faculty of perception. *Epicurus* fancied those particles of matter, of which Souls were framed, to be the finest and smallest; and for their smoother and easier motion, that they were all of a round figure. But supposing matter not to be naturally and of itself sensible, who can conceive what that is which should awaken the drowsy parts of it, to a lively sense of the impressions made upon it: It is every whit as easy to imagine how an instrument might be framed and tuned so artificially, as to hear its own sounds, and to be marvelously delighted with them; or that a glass might be polish'd to that fineness, as to see all those objects which are reflected upon it.

But there is one difficulty in this: for it may be said, if sensitive perception be an argument of the Soul's Immateriality, and consequently Immortality, then the Souls of beasts will be immortal, as well as the Souls of men. For answer to this, I shall say these things.

(1.) That the most general and common philosophy of the world, hath always acknowledged something in beasts besides their bodies, and that the faculty of sense and perception which is in them, is founded in a principle of a higher nature than matter. And as this was always the common philosophy of the world, so we find it to be a supposition of scripture, which frequently attributes Souls to beasts as well as to men, tho' of a much inferior nature. And therefore those particular philosophers, who have denied any immaterial principle, or a Soul to beasts, have also denied them to have sense, any more than a clock, or watch, or any other engine; and have imagined them to be nothing else but a finer and more complicated kind of engines, which by reason of the curiosity and tenderness of their frame, are more easily susceptible of all kind of motions and impressions from without, which impressions are the cause of all those actions that resemble those sensations which we men find in our selves: which is to say, that birds, and beasts, and fishes, are nothing else but a more curious sort of puppets, which by certain secret and hidden weights and springs do move up and down, and counterfeit the actions of life and sense. This I confess seems to me to be an odd kind of philosophy; and it hath this vehement prejudice against it, that if this were true, every man would have great cause to question the reality of his own perceptions, for to all appearance the sensation of beast are as real as ours, and in many things their senses much more exquisite than ours; and if nothing can be a sufficient argument to a man, that he is really endow'd with sense, besides his own consciousness of it, then every man hath reason to doubt whether all men in the world besides himself be not mere engines; for no man hath any other evidence, that another man is really endowed with sense, than he hath that brute creatures are so; for they appear to us to see, and hear, and feel, and smell, and taste things as truly and as exactly as any man in the world does.

(2.) Supposing beasts to have an immaterial principle distinct from their body, it will not from hence follow, that they are immortal, in the sense that we attribute Immortality to men. For Immortality, when we ascribe it to men, signifies two things.

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1. That

1. That the Soul remains after the Body, and is not corrupted and dissolved together with it.

2. That it lives in this separate state, and is sensible of happiness or misery.

1. Immortality imports that the Soul remains after the Body, and is not corrupted or dissolved together with it. And there is no inconvenience in attributing this sort of Immortality to the brute creatures. And here it is not necessary for us, who know so little of the ways and works of God, and of the secrets of nature, to be able to give a particular account what becomes of the Soul's of brute creatures after death: whether they return into the Soul and Spirit of the world, if there be any such thing, as some fancy; or whether they pass into the bodies of other animals which succeed in their rooms; I say, this is not necessary to be particularly determined; it is sufficient to lay down this in general as highly probable, that they are such a sort of spirits, which as to their operation and life, do necessarily depend upon matter, and require union with it; which union being dissolved, they lapse into an insensible condition, and a state of inactivity. For being endowed only with a sensitive principle, the operations of which do plainly depend upon an organical disposition of the body, when the body is dissolved all their activity ceaseth; and when this visible frame of the world shall be dissolved, and this scene of sensible things shall pass away, then it is not improbable that they shall be discharged out of being, and return to their first nothing: for tho' in their own nature they would continue longer, yet having served the end of their being, and done their work, it is not unsuitable to the same wisdom that made them, and commanded them into being, to let them sink into their first state.

2. Immortality, as applied to the spirits of men, imports that their Souls are not only capable of continuing, but living in this separate state, so as to be sensible of happiness and misery. For the Soul of man being of an higher nature, and not only endowed with a faculty of sense, but likewise other faculties which have no necessary dependance upon, or connexion with matter, having a sense of God, and of divine and spiritual things, and being capable of happiness in the enjoyment of God, or of misery in a separation from him; it is but reasonable to imagine, that the Souls of men shall be admitted to the exercise of these faculties, and the enjoyment of that life which they are capable of in a separate state. And this is that which constitutes that vast and wide difference between the Souls of men and beasts: and this degree of Immortality is as much above the other, as reason and religion are above sense.

3. Another faculty in us, which argues an immaterial, and consequently an immortal principle in man, is memory; and this likewise is common in some degree to several of the brute creatures, and it seems to be nothing else but a kind of continued sensation of things. And of this we can give no account from mere matter. For if that which we call the Soul, were nothing else but, as *Epicurus* imagined, a little wild-fire, a company of small round particles of matter in perpetual motion, it being a fluid thing, it would be liable to a continual dissipation of its parts, and the new parts that come, would be altogether strangers to the impressions made upon the old: so that supposing the Soul liable but to those changes which the grosser parts of our bodies, our flesh and blood, continually are liable to, by the evaporation and spending of the old, and an accession of new matter; (and if we suppose the Soul to be fluid matter, that is, consisting of particles, which are by no kind of connexion link'd to one another, it will in all probability be more easily dissipable than the grosser parts of the body, and) if so, how is it imaginable that these new and foreign particles should retain any sense of the impressions made upon those which are gone many years ago?

4. Another faculty which I shall instance in, is the will of man, which is endowed with liberty and freedom, and gives a man dominion over his own actions. Matter moves by necessary and certain laws, and cannot move if it be at rest, unless it be moved by another; and cannot rest, that is, cannot but move, if it be impell'd by another. Whence then are voluntary motions? Whence is the *αὐτεξέχαστον*, the arbitrary principle which we find in our selves, the freedom of action to do or not to do this or that, which we are intimately conscious to our selves of? Of all the operations of our minds, it is the hardest to give an account of liberty from mere matter. This *Epicurus* was sensible of, and infinitely puzzled with it, as we may see by the question which *Lucretius* puts. *Unde est hæc, inquam, satis avulsa voluntas?*

tas? How comes the Soul of man to have this peculiar privilege of freedom and liberty, above all other sorts of Matter that are in the world? Whence is it, that when all things else move by a fatal necessity, the soul of man should be exempted from that slavery? He does indeed attempt to give an account of it from a motion of declination which is proper and peculiar to the particles of the Soul: but that is a more unintelligible riddle than liberty itself. The

5. And last operation I shall instance in, is that of reason and understanding. Not to mention the activity and nimbleness of our thoughts, in the abstracted notions of our minds, the multitude of distinct ideas and notions which dwell together in our Souls, none of which are accountable from matter; I shall only instance in two particulars.

(1.) Those acts of reason and judgment whereby we over-rule the reports of our senses, and correct the errors and deceptions of them.

(2.) The contemplation of spiritual and divine things.

(1.) Those acts of reason and judgment whereby we over-rule the reports and determinations of sense. Our sense tells us, that things at a distance are less, than our reason tells us they are really in themselves; as that the body of the sun is but about a foot diameter: But our reason informs us otherwise. Now what is the principle that controuls our senses, and corrects the deception of them? If the Soul of man be mere matter, it can only judge of things according to the impressions which are made upon our senses: but we do judge otherwise, and see reason to do so many times. Therefore it must be some higher principle which judges of things not by the material impressions which they make upon our senses, but by other measures. And therefore to avoid this inconvenience, *Epicurus* was glad to fly the absurdity, to affirm that all things really are what they appear to us, and that in truth the sun is no bigger than it seems to be.

(2.) The contemplation of things spiritual and divine, is an argument that the Soul is of a higher original than any thing that is material. To contemplate the nature of God, and the divine excellencies and perfections; the meditation of a future state, and of the happiness of another world; those breathings which good men feel in their Souls after God, and the enjoyment of him, argue the spiritual nature of the Soul. *Hoc habet argumentum divinitatis suæ (saith Seneca) quod eam divina delectant, nec ut alienis interest sed suis.* The Soul of man hath this argument of its divine original, that it is so strangely delighted, so infinitely pleased and satisfied with the contemplation of divine things, and is taken up with these thoughts, as if they were its proper business and concernment. Those strong inclinations and desires after Immortality, and the pleasure which good men find in the fore-thoughts of the happiness which they hope to enter into, when their Souls shall quit these mansions; the restless aspirings of our Souls towards God, and those blessed mansions where he dwells, and where the Spirits of good men converse with him and one another; these signify our Souls to be of a nobler extraction than the earth, that they are descended from above, and that heaven is their country, their thoughts are so much upon it, and they are so desirous to return to it.

I shall conclude this argument from the noble and excellent operations of our Souls, of which we are conscious to our selves, with a passage of *Tully* to this purpose. *Animarum nulla in terris origo inveniri potest: nihil enim est in animis mixtum atque concretum, aut quod ex terra natum atque factum esse videatur.* The Souls of men have not their original from the earth, it is in vain to seek for it there: for there is nothing in the mind of man of a material mixture and composition, which we can imagine to be born or formed out of the earth. For, says he, among material and earthly things there is nothing, quod vim memoriæ, menti, cogitationis habeat, quod & præterita teneat, & futura provideat, & complecti possit præsentia. There's no earthly thing which hath the power of memory, of understanding, of thought, which retains things past, foresees and provides for things future, comprehends and considers things present. Singularis est igitur quædam natura atque vis animi, sejuncta ab his usitatis notisque naturis; so that the nature and power of the Soul are of a peculiar and singular kind, different from all those natures which we are acquainted with in this world. He concludes, itaque quicquid est quod sentit, quod sapit, quod vult, quod viget, cæleste & divinum est, ob eamque rem æternum sit necesse est. Therefore whatever that is which is endowed with a power of perception, with wisdom, with liberty, with so much vigour and activity as the Soul

Soul of man, is of heavenly and divine original, and for that reason is necessarily immortal, and to continue for ever.

Thus I have represented to you as briefly and plainly as I could, those which I account the chief and strongest arguments of this great principle of religion, the Soul's Immortality. Some of them are plain and obvious to every capacity; the rest, tho' they be above common capacities, yet were not to be neglected, because they may be useful to some, tho' not to all; and as those who are more wise and knowing should have patience, whilst the most common and plainest things are spoken for the instruction of ordinary capacities, so those of lower capacities should be content that many things should be spoken which may be useful to others, tho' they be above their reach.

To sum up then what hath been said from reason, for the proof of the Soul's Immortality. It is a natural dictate and notion of our minds, universally entertained in all ages and places of the world, excepting some very few persons and sects; it doth not contradict any other Principle that nature hath planted in us, but doth very well agree with those other notions which are most natural; it is most suitable to the natural hopes and fears of men; it evidently tends to the happiness and perfection of man, and to the good order and government of the world; lastly, it gives the fairest account of the phenomena of human nature, of those several actions and operations which we are conscious to our selves of.

Now supposing the Soul were immortal, what greater rational evidence than this can we expect for it? How can we without a revelation have more assurance of the things of this nature than these arguments give us, not taken singly, but as they concur together to make up an entire argument, and to give us sufficient evidence of this?

I do not say that these arguments do so necessarily conclude it, that there is an absolute impossibility the thing should be otherwise; but so as to render it sufficiently certain to a prudent and considerate man, and one that is willing to accept of reasonable evidence. For the generality of the Papists do pertinaciously maintain this unreasonable principle, that there can be no certainty of any thing without infallibility: yet some of the wiser of them have thought better of it, and are pleased to state the business of certainty otherwise; particularly *Melchior Canus*, one of the most learned of their writers, determines those things to be sufficiently certain, which no man can without imprudence and obstinacy disbelieve. *Certa apud homines ea sunt, quæ negari sine pervicacia & stultitia non possunt. Men esteem those things certain, which no man that is not unreasonably obstinate and imprudent can deny.* And I think the arguments I have brought for the Soul's Immortality, are such as no man that is unprejudiced and hath a prudent regard to his own interest can resist.

Thus I have done with the *first* thing I propounded to do for the proof of the Soul's Immortality, which was to shew what evidence of reason there is for it. I shall speak briefly to the

Second thing I propounded, which was to shew how little can be said against it, because this will indirectly give a strength and force to the arguments I have brought for it. For it is very considerable in any question or controversy, what strength there is in the arguments on both sides: for tho' very plausible arguments may be brought for a thing, yet if others as plausible and specious may be urged against it, this leaves the thing *in æquilibrio*, it sets the ballance even, and inclines the judgment neither way; nay, if the objections against a thing be considerable, tho' not so strong as the arguments for it, the considerableness of the objections does so far weaken the contrary arguments: but where the arguments on one hand are strong, and the objections on the contrary very slight, and such as may easily be answered, the weakness of the objections contributes to the strength of the argument for the other side of the question.

To come then to the business, I know but *three* objections which have any colour against this principle.

I. That the notion of a Spirit, or an immaterial substance, does imply a contradiction.

Ans. 1. This is only boldly said, and not the least colour of proof offer'd for it by the author that asserts it. This objection had indeed been considerable, if it had been made out as clearly, as it is confidently affirmed. In the mean time I think we may take leave to deny, that the notion of a Spirit hath any repugnancy in it, till some body think fit to prove it.

2. I told you that this question about the Soul's Immortality supposeth the existence to God to be already proved; and if there be a God, and it be an essential property of the divine nature, that he is a spirit, then there is such a thing as a spirit and immaterial substance, and consequently the notion of a spirit hath no contradiction in it: for if it had, there could be no such thing.

II. It is said, there is no express text for the Soul's Immortality in the old Testament.

Answ. This doth not properly belong to the intrinsical arguments and reason of the thing, but is matter of revelation. And this I shall fully speak to, when I come to shew what evidence the *Jews* had for the Soul's Immortality. In the mean time this may be a sufficient answer to this objection, that there is no absolute necessity why it should be expressly revealed in the old Testament, if it be, as I have shewn, a natural notion of our minds: for the Scripture supposeth us to be men, and to have an antecedent notion of those truths which are implanted in our nature, and therefore chiefly designs to teach us the way to that eternal happiness which we have a natural notion and hope of. The

III. Objection is from the near and intimate sympathy which is between the Soul and the Body, which appears in the vigor and strength of our faculties; as understanding and memory do very much depend upon the temper and disposition of the body, and do usually decay and decline with it.

Answ. The utmost that this objection signifies, is, that there is an intimate union and conjunction between the Soul and the Body, which is the cause of the sympathy which we find to be between them: but it does by no means prove, that they are one and the same essence. Now that there is such an intimate union and connexion between the Soul and Matter in all creatures endowed with life and sense, is acknowledged by all who affirm the immateriality of Souls; tho' the manner of this union be altogether unknown to us; and supposing such an union, it is but reasonable to imagine that there should be such a sympathy, that the body would be affected with the delights and disturbances of the mind, and that the Soul should also take part in the pleasures and pains of the body, that by this means it may be effectually excited and stirr'd up to provide for the supply of our bodily wants and necessities; and from this sympathy, it is easy to give account how it comes to pass, that our faculties of understanding, and memory, and imagination, are more or less vigorous, according to the good or bad temper and disposition of our bodies. For by the same reason that the mind may be grieved and afflicted at the pains and sufferings of the body, it may likewise be disorder'd and weaken'd in its operations by the distempers of the body. So that this objection only proves the Soul to be united to the body; but not to be the same thing with it.

S E R M O N CXXIII.

Of the Immortality of the Soul, as discover'd by Nature, and by Revelation.

*The fourth
Sermon on
this Text.*

2 TIM. i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished Death, and hath brought Light and Immortality to light through the Gospel.

HAVING in my three former discourses shewed what arguments natural reason doth furnish us with, for the Immortality of our Souls; I come now to the *Second* thing I propounded, which is to shew what assurance the world had *de facto*, of this great principle of religion, the Soul's Immortality, before the revelation of the gospel.

Before our Saviour's coming into the world, there were but two different religions: that of the Heathens, and that of the *Jews*. The religion of the Heathens was natural religion, corrupted and degenerated into idolatry: The religion of the *Jews* was revealed and instituted by God; but did suppose natural religion, and was super-added to it. Therefore I shall consider the Heathens and the *Jews* distinctly. And,

First, Shew what assurance the Heathens had of this principle of the Soul's Immortality.

Secondly, What the *Jews* had of it.

First, What assurance the Heathens had of the Soul's Immortality.

1. It is evident that there was a general inclination in mankind, even after its greatest corruption and degeneracy, to the belief of this principle; which appears in that all people and nations of the world, after they were sunk into the greatest degeneracy, and all (except only the *Jews*) became idolaters, did universally agree in this apprehension, that their Souls did remain after their bodies, and pass into a state of happiness or misery, according as they had demeaned themselves in this life: Not that they did generally reason themselves into this apprehension, by any convincing arguments, but did herein follow the bent and tendency of their natures, which did incline them thus to think. For no other reason can be given of the universal consent, even of the most rude and barbarous nations in this principle, besides the inclination of human nature to this opinion; that is, either men come into the world with this notion imprinted upon their minds, or else (which comes all to one) the understanding of man is naturally of such a frame and make, that left to itself, and the free exercise of its own thoughts, it will fall into this apprehension.

2. The unlearned and common people among the Heathen, seem to have had the truest and least wavering apprehensions in this matter; the reason of which seems to be plain, because their belief followed the bias and inclination of their nature, and they had not their natural notions embroiled and disordered by obscure and uncertain reasonings about it, as the philosophers had, whose understandings were perplexed with infinite niceties and objections, which never troubled the heads of the common people. By which means the vulgar had this advantage, that the natural dictates of their minds had their free course; and as they did not argue themselves into this principle, so neither were their natural hopes and fears check'd and controul'd by any objections to the contrary.

But then, this principle being only a kind of natural instinct in them, which did not awaken their minds by any deep consideration and reasoning about it, it had no great influence upon their lives. For as they were not much troubled with doubts concerning it, so neither did they deeply attend to the consequences of it: but as they followed the inclination of nature in the entertaining of this notion, so because it was not entertained upon deep consideration, it had no great effect upon them.

3. The learned among the heathen did not so generally agree in this principle, and those who did consent in it, were many of them more wavering and unsettled than the common people. *Epicurus* and his followers were peremptory in the denial of it: but by their own acknowledgment, they did herein offer great violence to their natures, and had much ado to divest themselves of the contrary apprehension and fears. Therefore the poet in the person of the *Epicurean*, represents it as a rare piece of happiness, and that which few attained to, to quit themselves of the notions of another state after this life:

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,

Atque metus omnes & inexorabile fatum

Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari.

The Stoicks were very inclinable to the belief of a future state; but yet they almost every where speak very doubtfully of it. *Seneca* and *Antoninus* often speak to this purpose, that if the Soul remain after this life, there's no doubt but that good men shall be happy, and bad men miserable; but whether the Soul out-live the Body or not, that they could not positively determine. *Aristotle* hath some express passages for the Soul's Immortality; but it seems he was not constant to himself in this matter, or else they have done him a great deal of wrong, who have wrote so many books on both sides concerning his opinion in this point. *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, and *Plato*, and many others of the most eminent philosophers, as *Tully* tells us, were full, not of assurance, but of very good hopes of the Soul's Immortality and a future State. *Socrates*, who was one of the best and wisest of all the Heathens, does in his discourses before his death, (as *Plato* relates them) support and bear up himself against the terrors of death, only with this consideration, that he was full of hopes that when he left this world, he should pass into a far happier and more perfect state; that he should go to God and live with him, and keep company with the spirits of good men: And that he is not positive and peremptory in it, is no argument

ment that he doubted of this more than any thing else; for that was his fashion in all his discourses, to speak modestly, and with some shew of doubting, even concerning those things whereof he had the greatest assurance: But this is plain, that he was so well assured of it, as to die chearfully, and to leave the world without any kind of disturbance, upon the hopes that he had conceived of another life; and surely they must be pretty confident hopes, that will bear up a man's spirit to such a height when he comes to die. In short, he told his friends the morning before he died, that he had as good assurance of the Soul's Immortality as human reason could give, and that nothing but a divine revelation could give him greater satisfaction. And to mention no more, *Tully*, the chief philosopher among the *Romans*, expresseth himself with a good degree of confidence in this matter. He argues excellently for it in several parts of his works; but particularly in his book *de Senectute*, he declares his own opinion of it, where, speaking to *Scipio* and *Laelius*, he says, *I do not see why I may not adventure to declare freely to you, what my thoughts are concerning death; and perhaps I may discern better than others what it is, because I am now by reason of my age not far from it. I believe, says he, that the fathers, those eminent persons and my particular friends, are still alive, and that they live the life which only deserves the name of life.* And afterward, *Nec me solum ratio ac disputatio impulit ut ita crederem, sed nobilitas etiam summorum philosophorum & auctoritas; nor has reason only and disputation brought me to this belief, but the famous judgment and authority of the chief philosophers.* And having mentioned *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, and *Plato*, he breaks out into this rapture, *Ob præclarum diem quum in illud animorum concilium cetumque proficiscar, & cum hac turba & colluvione discedam! Ob glorious day, when I shall go unto the great council and assembly of Spirits, when I shall go out of this tumult and confusion, and quit the sink of this world, when I shall be gathered to all those brave Spirits who have left this world, and meet with Cato the greatest and best of mankind!* What could a Christian almost say with more extasy? And he concludes, *Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro, nec mihi hunc errorem quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo; si mortuus, ut quidam minuti philosophi censent, nihil sentiam, non vereor ne hunc errorem meum mortui philosophi irrideant.* But if after all I am mistaken herein, I am pleas'd with my error, which I would not willingly part with whilst I live: and if after my death (as some little philosophers suppose) I shall be depriv'd of all sense, I have no fear of being expos'd and laugh'd at by them, for this my mistake, in the other world.

Thus you see what assurance the Heathens had of this principle, and that there was a general inclination and propension in them to the belief of it: and as it was not firmly and upon good grounds believed among the common people; so neither was it doubted of or call'd in question among them. Among the philosophers it was a matter of great uncertainty, being stiffly denied by some, doubted of by others; and those who were most inclinable to the entertainment of it, do rather express their desires and hopes of it, than their full assurance concerning it. I come therefore,

Secondly, To the other enquiry, what assurance the *Jews* had of the Soul's Immortality and a future State? And of this, I shall give you an account in these following particulars.

1. They had all the assurance which natural light, and the common reason of mankind does ordinarily afford men concerning this matter; they had common to them with the Heathens, all the advantage that nature gives men to come to the knowledge of this truth. But that which I chiefly design to enquire into, is, what singular advantage they had above the Heathens, by means of those special revelations which were made to them from God. Therefore,

2. They had by divine revelation a fuller assurance of those truths which have a nearer connexion with this principle, and which do very much tend to facilitate the belief of it; as namely, concerning the providence of God, and his interesting himself particularly in the affairs of the world. In the history of *Moses* they had a satisfactory account of the original of the world, that God made it, and that he had eminently interposed in the government of it; and had given several eminent testimonies of his providence, in the general deluge which was brought upon the world, and in the dreadful particular judgment from heaven upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, and the neighbouring cities; in his special providence towards *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; in that series of miracles whereby their deliverance was wrought out of *Egypt*, and they were carried thro' the wilderness to the promised land; and in those

those two standing miracles of the fruitfulness of every sixth year, because the land was to rest the seventh; and preserving the land from the invasion of enemies, when they came up to *Jerusalem* three times a year; by which God did testify a very particular and immediate providence toward them. Now whatever gives assurance of God's providence, does very much facilitate the belief of a future state. *Epicurus* was well aware of the connexion of these principles, and therefore in order to the freeing of the minds of men from the fears of a future state, he makes way for it by removing the providence of God, and denying that he either made the world, or concerned himself in the government of it.

And then besides this, the *Jews* had assurance of the existence of spirits by the more immediate ministry of angels among them. And this does directly make way for the belief of an immaterial principle, and consequently of the Soul's Immortality. And this the *Sadduces*, who were a kind of *Epicureans* among the *Jews*, were sensible of; and therefore as they said that there was *no resurrection*, and *no future state after this life*, so they denied that there was either *angel or spirit*, as the Apostle tells us, *Acts xxiii. 7*. From whence by the way we may take notice of the great mistake of those, who, from the opinion of the *Sadducees*, argue that eternal life was not at all believed under the Old Testament; because if it had been so, it is not credible that it would have been disowned by those who acknowledged the authority of those books; whereas we see that they denied, to serve their hypothesis, other things which were most expressly revealed in the Old Testament, as the doctrine of angels and spirits.

3. There were some remarkable instances in the Old Testament, which did tend very much to persuade men to this truth: I mean the instances of *Enoch* and *Elias*, who did not die like other men, but were translated, and taken up into heaven in an extraordinary manner. From which instances it was obvious to considerate men, to reason, that God did intend by these examples to encourage good men with the hopes of another state after this life. And accordingly the Apostle to the *Hebrews* makes the belief of future rewards, a necessary consequence from this instance of *Enoch's* translation, *Heb. xi. 5, 6*. By faith *Enoch* was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

4. This was typified and shadowed forth to them by the legal administrations. The whole œconomy of their worship and temple, of their rites and ceremonies, and sabbaths, did shadow out some farther thing to them, tho' in a very obscure manner: The land of *Canaan*, and their coming to the possession of it, after so many years travel in the wilderness, did represent that heavenly inheritance which good men should be possessed of after the troubles of this life. And these were intended by God to signify those greater and better things to them, and so understood by those who were more devout and knowing among them; else the Apostle, in his epistle to the *Hebrews*, had gone upon a very ill ground, when he all along takes it for granted, that the dispensation of the law, and all the ceremonies of it, were of a farther signification, *Heb. x. 1*. The law having a shadow of good things to come.

5. This was in general, and by good consequence, though not obvious to all, yet sufficiently to prudent and discerning men, revealed in the book of the law taken precisely: I mean the five books of *Moses*. It is said of *Abel*, that God was pleased with his sacrifice, tho' with *Cain's* he was not well pleased, *Gen. iv*. Upon this *Cain* was angry at his brother, and slew him. Now if the Immortality of the Soul and a future State, be not supposed and taken for granted in this story, this very passage is enough to cut the sinews, and pluck up the roots of all religion. For if there were no rewards after this life, it were obvious for every man to argue from this story, that it was a dangerous thing to please God; if this were all that *Abel* got by it, to be knock'd on the head by his brother, who offended God.

But I shall chiefly insist on the general promises which we find in these books of *Moses*, of God's blessing good men, and declaring that he was *their God*, even after their death. Now I shall shew that these promises did involve the happiness of another life, and were intended by God to signify thus much, and were so understood by good men under that dispensation. That these general promises did contain this sense under them, and were intended by God to signify thus much, is evident from our Saviour's citation of that text, to confute the *Sadducees*, *I am the God of Abraham*,

the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; from whence he reasons thus, *Now God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him: the force of which argument was directly and immediately levell'd against the main error of the Sadducees, which was the denial of a future State.* This our Saviour immediately proves from this text, and by consequence the resurrection, which the Sadducees did not deny upon any other account, but because they did not * believe a future State.

* See Vol. 1.
Serm. 23.
publish'd
by the
Archbishop.

6. Toward the expiration of the legal dispensation, there was yet a clearer revelation of a future State. The text in *Daniel* seems to be much plainer than any in the Old Testament, *Dan. xii. 2. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* And to this text the seven brethren, who were cruelly put to death under the persecution of *Antiochus*, seem to refer, when they comfort themselves with the hopes of another life, *2 Mac. vii. 9.* where one of them, ready to die, says thus to *Antiochus*, *Thou like a fury takest us out of this present life, but the king of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life.* To the same purpose another of them, *ver. 14.* when he was tormented, expresseth his confidence thus; *It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by him: but as for thee (speaking of Antiochus) thou shalt have no resurrection to life.* Where he seems to allude to the twofold resurrection mention'd by *Daniel*. And tho' this history of the *Maccabees* be not canonical, yet the Apostle hath warranted the truth of it to us, at least in this particular, for he plainly refers to this story, *Heb. xi. 35. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.*

7. Notwithstanding this, I say, that the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State, was not expressly and clearly revealed in the Old Testament, at least not in *Moses's* law. The special and particular promises of that dispensation, were of temporal good things; and the great blessing of eternal life, was but somewhat obscurely involved and signified in the types and general promises: For considering that the particular promises were plainly of temporal things, it was very obvious to those who were not so prudent and discerning, to interpret the general promises so as to comprehend only that kind of blessings which were express'd in the special and particular promises, and so likewise to understand the general threatnings. And upon this account, the Apostle to the *Hebrews* principally advanceth the new covenant of the Gospel above the old dispensation; because the Gospel had clear, and express, and special promises of eternal life, which the law had not, *Heb. viii. 6. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was establish'd upon better promises.* For the same reason Christ is said here in the text, *by his appearance to have abolish'd death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.* And so I proceed to the

Second thing I propounded, which is to shew what farther evidence and assurance the Gospel gives us of it, than the world had before: what clearer discoveries we have by Christ's coming, than the Heathens or *Jews* had before.

That the Gospel hath brought to us a clearer discovery of this than they had, is here expressly said; that God's gracious purpose concerning our salvation, which was, before the world began, decreed to be accomplish'd in Christ, is now made manifest by his coming into the world; *ver. 9. Who hath saved and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began, but is now made manifest, &c.* Which is emphatically spoken, *now*, and not till *now*, importing that before the appearing of our Saviour, it was in great measure hid from the world, and that men had very dark and obscure apprehensions of it, till it was brought to light by the Gospel. And this is not only affirmed in this place, but very frequently all over the New Testament. I will mention some of the most express places to this purpose. *John vi. 6, 8.* When many of Christ's followers left him, he asks the twelve, *Will ye also go away?* To whom *Peter* answers, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* As if he had said, what master should we chuse to follow rather than thee, who bringest to the world, the glad tidings of eternal life? What discipline or institution is there in the world, that gives such encouragement to its followers? Others may promise great things in this world; but in the declarations and promises of another life, we cannot rely upon any one but him that comes from God, as we are fully persuaded thou dost; for it follows in the next verse, *And we believe,*

believe, and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Tit. ii. 11, &c. The grace of God which brings salvation hath appeared to all men, &c. Where the revelation of the gospel is called *the grace of God which brings salvation*, that is, which discovers to the world that eternal happiness, which was in a great measure hid from it before, and encourageth men by the hopes of that blessing to live a holy life. The Apostle to the *Hebrews* doth all along in his epistle, use this as an argument to the *Jews*, to take them off from the *Mosaical* institution, and to persuade them to entertain the doctrine of the gospel, as making clearer discoveries, and giving greater assurance of eternal life and salvation, than the law did. *Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4, 5. For if the word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience receiv'd a just recompence of reward: How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? For unto the Angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.* That is, if the promises and threatnings of the law, which was deliver'd but by the ministry of Angels, were made good, and the offenders under that dispensation were severely punish'd, what shall become of us, if we neglect the dispensation of the gospel, which reveals to us greater things, even eternal life and salvation, and which receiveth so great a confirmation, both from Christ himself, by whom it was first deliver'd, and also from his Apostles, who publish'd it to the world, and gave testimony to it by so many miracles? And it follows, at *ver. 5. For unto the Angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we now speak.* The meaning of which is this, the promises and threatnings of the law, which was delivered by Angels were temporal, and such as respected this world, but now God has sent his Son, he hath in him made promises of a greater salvation, he hath put into his hands the great things of another world, and hath given him power to promise eternal life, and to give it to as many as he pleases. So the danger of contemning the gospel, must needs be much greater than that of the law, because the happiness which the gospel promises, is so much greater: For unto the Angels, who delivered the law, God gave no power and commission to make clear and express promises of the rewards of another world. *Unto the Angels did he not put in subjection the world to come; but so hath he done to his Son. He hath committed all judgment to him, and hath given him power to raise up those who have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation:* as our Saviour himself speaks, *John v. 22.* And thus he hath put the world to come in subjection unto his Son, having empower'd him to encourage and argue men to the obedience of his laws, by the rewards and punishments of another world: whereas the law deliver'd by Angels, had only the sanction of temporal threatnings and promises. *Heb. vii. 16.* the gospel is call'd *the power of an eternal life*, in opposition to the law, which is call'd *a carnal commandment*; not only because the precepts of it respected the body, but because the promises of it were of temporal good things which belong to this Life; and at the *19th vers.* the gospel, in opposition to the *Mosaical* dispensation, is call'd *the bringing in of a better hope*: *The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; εὐσυνωχή, the superinduction of a better hope*; by which the Apostle plainly signifies, that this was the imperfection of the *Mosaical* dispensation, that it did not give men firm hopes and assurance of eternal life; but the gospel hath *superinduced this hope*, and thereby supplied the great defect of the former administration. To the same purpose he tells us, *chap. viii. 6.* that Christ hath now obtained a more excellent ministry, for as much as he is the mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises. How better promises? Why instead of the promises of a temporal *Canaan* and earthly blessings, Christ hath given us promises of eternal life and happiness. Therefore in the next *chap.* he is call'd *an high Priest of good things to come*, and *ver. 15.* For this cause he is said to be the mediator of the new Testament, that they which are call'd might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. Once more the Apostle, *ch. x. ver. 1.* makes this the great imperfection of the law, in opposition to the gospel, that it had only a shadow of good things to come, but not the very image of the things; that is, it did but darkly typify and shadow forth the things of another life, not give us so express an image, and lively representation of the rewards of another world, as the gospel does. Therefore St. John makes eternal life to be the great promise of the

gospel, the great blessing which Christ hath revealed to the world, 1 *John* ii. 25. *This is the promise which he hath promised, even eternal life.* So that you see, that the full and clear discovery of eternal life, is every where in the new Testament attributed to Christ, and to the revelation which by him was made to the world.

It remains now, that I shew more particularly, wherein the gospel hath given the world greater evidence and assurance of a future state, than they had before.

1. The rewards of another life, are most clearly reveal'd in the gospel. That God hath made a revelation of this by Christ, is an advantage which the Heathen wanted, who were destitute of divine revelation. There are many truths which men may be well inclined to believe, and for the proof of which, the wiser and more knowing sort of men may be able to offer very fair and plausible arguments; and yet for all this they may have no confident assurance of them, or at least may be very far from a well-grounded certainty, such as will give rest and satisfaction to the mind of a considerate and inquisitive man. All men are not capable of the force of a reason; nay, there are very few who can truly judge of the weakness or strength of an argument. There are many things which admit of very plausible arguments on both sides; and the generality of men are very apt to be imposed upon by very slight arguments, to be moved any way with some little shew and appearance of reason. So that when this principle of the Soul's Immortality came to be disputed in the world, and the sects of the philosophers, the learned men of those times, came to be divided in opinion about it, some disputing directly against it, others doubting very much of it, and scarce any pretending to any great assurance of it, it was no wonder, if by this means many came to be in suspense about it; but now divine revelation, when that comes, it takes away all doubting, and gives men assurance of that, concerning which they were uncertain before. For every man that believes a God, does firmly believe this principle, that whatever is revealed by him is true: But especially if the revelation be clear and express, then it gives full satisfaction to the mind of man, and removes all jealousy and suspicions of the contrary. And this is a great advantage which the gospel gives us in this matter, above what the *Jews* had. They had some kind of revelation and discovery of this under the dispensation of the law; but very darkly, in types and shadows: but the gospel gives us a most express revelation of it, is full of special promises to this purpose, made in clear words, free from all ambiguity, or liableness to be interpreted to another sense. So that if we compare the law and the gospel together, we shall see a vast difference as to this matter. Under the law, the promise of eternal life was only comprehended in some general words, from which a man that had true notions of God and religion, might be able to infer, that God intended some reward for good men, and punishment for wicked men, beyond this life: But the promises of temporal good things were special and express, and their law was full of them. Contrarywise in the new Testament, the most special and express promise is that of eternal life, and this the books of the new Testament are full of; as for temporal blessings, they are but sparingly and obscurely promised, in comparison of the other.

2. The rewards of another life, as they are clearly and expressly revealed by the gospel, so that they may have the greater power and influence upon us, and we may have the greater assurance of them, they are revealed with very particular circumstances. And herein the gospel gives us a great advantage, both above the Heathens and *Jews*. For tho' a man was satisfied in general of a state after this life, that mens Souls should survive their bodies, and pass into another world, where it shall be well with them that have done well in this world, and ill to those that have done ill; yet no man, without a revelation, could conjecture the particular circumstances of that State. What wild descriptions do the Heathen poets, who were their most antient divines, make of Heaven and Hell, of the *Elysian* fields, and the infernal regions! But now the gospel, for our greater assurance and satisfaction, hath revealed many particular circumstances of the future State to us; as that all men at the end of the world shall be summon'd to make a solemn appearance before the Lord *Jesus Christ*, whom God hath made judge of the world, as a reward of his patience and sufferings; that the bodies of men shall, in order to that appearance, be raised up by the mighty power of God, and united to their Souls, that as they have been instruments of the Soul in acts of holiness and sin, so they may take part likewise in the happiness and torments of it. There are several other circumstances the gospel hath

revealed to us concerning our future state, which had they not been revealed, we could never have known, hardly have conjectur'd; in all which, besides the assurance that they are reveal'd, it is a great satisfaction to us, that there is nothing in them that is unworthy of God, or that favours of the weakness and vanity of human imagination.

3. The gospel gives us yet farther assurance of these things, by such an argument as is like to be the most convincing and satisfactory to common capacities; and that is by a lively instance of the thing to be proved, in *raising Christ from the dead*, Acts xvii. 30, 31.

'Tis true indeed, under the old Testament there were two instances somewhat of this nature; *Enoch* and *Elias* were immediately translated, and taken up alive into heaven; but these two instances do in many respects fall short of the other. For after Christ was raised from the dead, he convers'd forty days with his Disciples, and satisfied them that he was risen; after which he was in their sight visibly taken up into heaven: And as an evidence that he was possess'd of his glorious kingdom, he sent down, according to his promise, his holy Spirit in miraculous gifts, to assure them by those testimonies of his royalty, that he was in heaven, and to qualify them by those miraculous powers to convince the world of the truth of their doctrine.

Now what argument more proper to convince them of another life after this, than to see a man raised from the dead, and restored to a new life? What fitter to satisfy a man concerning heaven, and the happy estate of those there, than to see one visibly taken up into heaven? And what more fit to assure us, that the promises of the gospel are real, and shall be made good to us, than to see him who made these promises to us, raise himself from the dead, and go up into Heaven, and from thence to dispense miraculous gifts and powers abroad in the world, as evidences of the power and authority which he was invested withal? All the philosophical arguments that a man can bring for the Soul's Immortality, and another life, will have no force upon vulgar apprehensions, in comparison of these sensible demonstrations, which give an experiment of the thing, and furnish us with an instance of something of the same kind, and of equal difficulty with that which is propounded to our belief.

4. And lastly, the effects which the clear discovery of this truth had upon the world, are such, as the world never saw before, and are a farther inducement to persuade us of the truth and reality of it. After the gospel was entertained in the world, to shew that those who embrac'd it did fully believe this principle, and were abundantly satisfied concerning the rewards and happiness of another life; they did for the sake of their religion despise this life and all the enjoyments of it, from a thorough persuasion of a far greater happiness than this world could afford, remaining in the next life. With what cheerfulness did they suffer persecutions, with what joy and triumph did they welcome torments, and embrace death, *knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance!* Thus when *life and immortality was brought to light by the gospel*, death was as it were quite *abolish'd*; those of the weakest age and sex, women and children, did familiarly encounter it with as great a bravery, and bore up against the terrors of it with as much courage, as any of the greatest spirits among the *Romans* ever did: and this not in few instances, but in vast numbers. No Emperor in the world ever had so numerous an army of persons resolved to fight for him, as this *Captain of our Salvation*, this *Prince of life and glory* had of persons courageously resolved, and cheerfully contended to die for him.

Now this wonderful effect, the like of which the world never saw before, was very suitable to the nature of this doctrine. Suppose that God from heaven should have given men assurance of another life after this, in which good men should be unspeakably happy: What more reasonable to imagine, than that persons so assured should despise this life, and all the enjoyments of it, in comparison of the eternal and unconceivable happiness, which they were persuaded they should be made partakers of in another world? So that whatever assurance an express and clear revelation from God of the Soul's Immortality and another life, together with the particular circumstances of that state; whatever assurance a lively instance and example of the thing, in the person of him who brings this doctrine to the world; whatever consequent miracles, and suitable effects upon the minds of men to such a principle: I say, whatever assurance and satisfaction these can give of this principle, all this the gospel hath given us, beyond whatever the Heathen or *Jews* had before.

The Inference I shall make from this discourse, shall be only this: That if there be such a state after this life, then how does it concern every man to provide for it?

it? Every action that we do in this life, will have a good or bad influence upon our everlasting condition, and the consequences of it will extend themselves to eternity. Did men seriously consider this, that they carry about them immortal Souls that shall live for ever, they would not trifle away the opportunities of this life, bend all their thoughts, and employ their designs in the present gratification of their senses, and the satisfaction of their fleshly part, which shall shortly die and moulder into dust: but they would make provision for the state which is beyond the grave, and lay designs for eternity, which is infinitely the most considerable duration; they would not, like children, take care for the present, without any prospect to the future, and lay out all they have to please themselves for a day, without any regard to the remaining part of their lives. Nothing can be more unbecoming christians, whose whole religion pretends to be built upon the firm belief of another world, than to be intent upon the things of this present life, to the neglect of their Souls and all Eternity.

Seeing then we pretend to be assured of immortal life, and to have clear discoveries of everlasting happiness and glory, as we hope to be made partakers of this portion, let us live as it becomes the candidates of heaven, those that are heirs of another world, and *the children of the resurrection*, that this grace of God, which hath brought salvation, may teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present life, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

S E R M O N CXXIV.

Of the Certainty of a Future Judgment.

The first
Sermon on
this Text.

2 COR. V. 10.

For we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

THE Apostle, in the beginning of this chapter, expresseth his earnest desire, if God saw it fit, to quit *this earthly tabernacle*, for a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. But however God should dispose of him, he tells us that he made it his constant endeavour, so to behave himself, that both in this present state, whilst he continued in the body, and when he should quit it, and appear before God, he might be approved and accepted of him. And that which made him so careful was, because there was a day certainly coming, wherein every man must give an account of himself to the great judge of the world, and receive the just recompence of his actions done in this life, v. 9, 10. *Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

Which words are so plain and powerful, so easy to be understood, and of such a mighty force and influence, if thoroughly believed, that the very repeating of them is sufficient to awaken men to a serious care of their lives and actions, and a powerful consideration to persuade them to do every thing, with respect to that solemn account they must one day make to God of all the actions done in this life.

But that the truth contained in them, may make the greater impression upon us, I shall distinctly consider the words, and handle, as briefly as I can, the several propositions contained in them.

The general and principal proposition contained in these words is, the certainty of a future judgment.

But besides this principal proposition, which comprehends the general meaning and intention of these words, there are *four* other more particular propositions contained in them.

First, That the administration of this judgment will be committed to the Lord Jesus Christ; for which reason the tribunal before which we must appear, is called, *The judgment-seat of Christ. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.*

Secondly, That all men are liable to this judgment; no person of what condition soever shall be exempted from it. *We must all appear.*

Thirdly, That all the actions which men have done in this life shall then come to account, and they shall be judged for them. *That every one may receive the things done in the body.*

Fourthly, That sentence will then be pass'd according to the quality of mens actions, whether good or bad: *every one shall receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil.*

But I shall at present only speak to the principal proposition contained in the words, concerning the certainty of a future and general judgment, *viz.* That at the end of the world, there shall be a general and publick assize, when all persons that have lived in this world (except only the judge himself, our blessed Saviour, who is *the man ordained by God to judge the world*) shall come upon their trial, and all the actions which they have done, shall come under a strict examination; and according as men have demeaned themselves in this world, towards God and man, they shall receive sentence, and rewards shall be distributed to them, according to the nature and quality of their actions. And tho' all these particulars be not express'd in the text, yet they are virtually contained in the general expressions of it, and fully and clearly delivered in other texts of scripture.

The truth and certainty of a future and general judgment, I shall endeavour to confirm from these *three* heads of arguments.

I. From the acknowledgments of natural light.

II. From the notions which men generally have of God and his providence.

III. From express and clear revelation of holy scripture.

I. From the acknowledgments of natural light. And I might shew the general consent of mankind in this matter, by all sorts of human testimonies; and from all kinds of writers in all ages: But this would be almost endless, and not so proper for a plain and practical discourse upon this subject. And therefore passing by testimonies, I shall mainly insist upon this, that the consciences of men do secretly acknowledge a difference between good and evil. Hence it is that men find great peace and quiet and satisfaction of mind, in the doing of good and virtuous actions, and have secret and comfortable hopes, that this kind of actions will some time or other be considered and rewarded; and they are apt to maintain these hopes, and to support themselves with them, even when they despair to meet with any reward of their good and honest actions in this world.

And on the other hand, men find a secret fear and horror, and are inwardly ashamed and confounded in their own minds, when they are about a wicked enterprise, and engaged in an ill design; their consciences check them and terrify them, and their own minds bode ill to them, as if mischief and vengeance would overtake them one time or other; and this, when no eye sees them, and what they are a doing does not fall under the cognizance of any human court or tribunal, nor is liable to any censure or punishment from any human authority; yet for all that, they have many stings and lashes from their own minds, feel many checks and rebukes from their own consciences, when they do any thing which they ought not to do, tho' no man can charge them with it, or call them to an account for it.

Now these hopes and fears do argue, if not the firm belief and persuasion of a future judgment, yet great suspicions and misgivings of it in bad men; and in good men, secret and comfortable apprehensions concerning it. From whence else can it be, that good men, tho' they find that virtue is discountenanced, and goodness many times suffers, and is persecuted in this world, and that the best actions and designs are often unsuccessful; whence, I say, is it that good men, notwithstanding this, bear up and persist in their course, but because they have this inward apprehension and persuasion, that there will be a time, when virtue and goodness will be considered and rewarded, tho' not in this world? And whence is it, that bad men, tho' they prosper in their impiety, are yet guilty and fearful and timorous, but because they stand in awe of a Being, greater and more righteous and more powerful than themselves; but because they have some secret apprehensions of

of an invisible judge, and inward presage of a future vengeance, which sooner or later will overtake them; and because they believe there will be a time when all the wickedness they have done shall be accounted for? Insomuch that when they have done what they can, they cannot shake off these fears, nor quit themselves of these apprehensions of divine justice, threatening and pursuing them for their evil deeds. All which are plain acknowledgments of a natural apprehension and persuasion born with us, and riveted in our minds, concerning a future judgment.

II. This will farther appear from the natural notion which men have of a God, and his providence. This is essential to the notion of a God, that he is good, and holy, and just; and consequently, that he loves goodness, and hates iniquity; and therefore it must be agreeable to his nature, to countenance the one, and to discountenance the other, in such a manner as becomes the wise Sovereign and Governor of the world. Now this cannot be solemnly and openly done, but by a publick distribution of rewards and punishments; and this we see is not done in this world. The dispensations of God's providence in this world, toward good and bad men, are many times very promiscuous, and very cross, and contrary to what might be expected from the wise and just Sovereign of the world, from one whom we believe to love righteousness, and to hate iniquity. For virtuous and holy men are often ill treated in this world, grievously harassed and afflicted, and that *for righteousness sake*: and bad men many times flourish and are prosperous, *they are not in trouble like other men, neither are they plagued like other men*. And this is a very great objection against the providence of God; if there were no other consideration had of virtue and vice, no other kind of retribution made to good and bad men, but what we see in this world. And therefore the justice of the divine providence seems to require, that there should be a day of recompence, and a solemn and publick distribution of rewards and punishments to the righteous and to the wicked. For this is plainly a state of trial and probation, of patience, and forbearance to sinners, and of exercise to good men; and being a state of trial, it is not so proper a season for the distribution of publick justice. But since the justice of God doth not appear in this world, it seems very reasonable to believe, that there will be a time when it will be made manifest, and every eye shall see it; that God will one day fully vindicate his righteousness, and acquit the honour of his justice, and that there shall be a general assize held, when all men shall have a fair and open trial, and *God will render to every man according to his works*.

Now the justice of God's providence is in a great measure hid and covered, but there will come *ἡμέρα ἀποκαλύψεως* (as the Apostle calls the day of judgment, Rom. ii. 5.) *a day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*; when he will bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day, and every mouth shall be stopp'd, and every conscience and heart of man acknowledge the righteous judgment of God.

And in the mean time God contents himself to give some particular and remarkable instances of his rewarding and punishing justice in this world, which may be to us an earnest of a future and general judgment; he is pleased sometimes in the dispensations of his providence, clearly to separate and distinguish *the precious from the vile*, remarkably to deliver good men, and to *snare the wicked in the works of their own hands*. Sometimes he gives good men some foretastes of heaven, some earnest of their future happiness in this life: And on the other hand, he many times gives sinners some *præjudicia divini judicii*, some intimations of a future judgment, and shadows of that *utter darkness*, where they are to dwell for ever; he drops down now and then a little of hell into the conscience of a sinner. That fire which is kindled in some mens consciences in this life, that unspeakable anguish, and those inexplicable horrors, which some sinners have felt in this world, may serve to give us notice of the extreme severity of the divine justice towards impenitent sinners: that miraculous deluge that swept away the old world; those stupendous and terrible showers of fire and brimstone, which consumed *Sodom and Gomorrah*, and the cities about; that dreadful earthquake which swallowed up *Corah* and his company, and let them down as it were quick into hell, may serve for pledges and earnest to us of the dismal punishments and torments of the next world.

But notwithstanding all these particular and remarkable instances of the divine justice, yet considering how unequal and promiscuous the greatest part of God's providences

Providences are in this world, it is highly requisite, that there should be a general Judgment, for a more clear and full manifestation of the justice and equity of the divine Providence.

II. But this will most evidently appear from the clear and express revelation of the Holy Scripture. I will not cite texts out of the Old Testament to this purpose, because these things were but obscurely revealed to the *Jews* in comparison; *Life and Immortality being brought to light by the Gospel.* Yet St. Jude tells us, that there was an early revelation of this to the old world, ver. 14, 15. *And Enoch also the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly.* But whether this refer to the flood, or the final Judgment of the world, is not so clear and certain; however, this is most plainly revealed by our blessed Lord and Saviour, in the New Testament. The process of this great day, with several of the particular circumstances of it, are fully described by our Saviour, *Matth. xxv.* and in the vision of St. John, *Rev. xx. 11, 12, 13.* And the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour do most frequently declare and inculcate it. *Acts xvii. 30, 31.* *But now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* *Rom. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.* Where speaking of the day of Judgment, he calls it, *The day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil.* *1 Pet. i. 17.* *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work.* *2 Pet. iii. 10.* *But the day of the Lord will come, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, &c.*

Thus you see the truth and certainty of a future Judgment confirmed, from the acknowledgments of men's natural hopes and fears, from the natural notions which men have concerning God and his Providence, and from plain revelation of scripture.

All that I shall do farther at present, shall be to make some reflections upon what hath been delivered, concerning the certainty of a future general Judgment. And,

I. If there be such a day certainly a-coming, it may justly be matter of wonder and astonishment to us, to see the general impiety and stupidity of men, how wicked they are, and how careless of their lives and actions, and how insensible of that *great and terrible day of the Lord*, which is coming upon all flesh, and, for any thing we know to the contrary, may be very near us, and *even at the door.* How securely do the greatest part of men pass away their time, some in worldly business, others in worldly pleasures and vanity, and a great many in wickedness and vice? Surely such men have no apprehensions of a future Judgment: surely they do not believe that there will be any memorial of their actions in another world, and that they shall be called to a strict and severe account for all the actions of this life: they do not think that there is a just and powerful Being above them, who now observes every thing that they do, and will one day judge them for it; that there is a pen always writing, and making a faithful record of all the passages of their lives; and that these volumes shall one day be produced and opened, and men shall be judged out of the things that are written in them: and all our thoughts, words, and actions, shall pass under a most severe trial and examination.

Or if men do believe these things, they stifle and suppress this belief, and *detain this great truth of God in unrighteousness*; they do not attend to it, and consider it, that it may have its due awe and influence upon their lives. For it is not imaginable, that if men were possessed with a firm belief and persuasion of this *great and terrible day of the Lord*, they should be so careless and secure, as we see they are, and have so little regard to what they do; that they should pass whole days, and weeks, and years, in the gross neglect of God and religion, and of their immortal Souls; that they should *spend their days in vanity, and their years in pleasure*: that they should live in a continued course of impiety and profaneness, of lewdness, and intemperance, in the cursed habits of swearing and cursing: which are now grown so common among us, that a man cannot walk in the street, without having his ears grated with

this hellish noise; and that they should go on in these courses, without any great regret and disturbance, as if no danger attended them, as if justice were asleep, and all their actions would be buried with them, and never rise up against them.

What can we resolve this into, but either into habitual or actual atheism and infidelity? Either men do not at all believe a judgment to come; or else they do not actually consider it, and attend to the natural and proper consequences of such a belief? one of these two is necessary. It seems very hard to charge the generality of wicked men with habitual atheism and unbelief, but that the spirit of God in scripture so often does it. Psal. xiv. 1. *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.* How doth that appear? It follows, *They are corrupt, and have done abominable works, there is none that doth good.* And Psal. xxxvi. 1. *The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes.* David speaks as if the wicked practices of men did convince him, that they had no belief and apprehension of a God.

Nay, even after those clear discoveries which the gospel hath made of a future judgment, our Saviour seems to foretel a general infidelity among men, at least as to this particular article of a future judgment, *Luke xviii. 8. Nevertheless when the son of man shall come, shall he find faith upon the earth?* and St. Peter tells us, *2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming?* that is, deriding the belief and expectation which the christians had of a future judgment.

But to be sure, if the generality of men be not already sunk thus low, as to disbelieve these things, yet this at least is evident from the lives of men, that they are strangely inconsiderate, and guilty of the most gross and stupid inadvertency that can befall reasonable creatures. For I dare appeal to any man of understanding and serious consideration, whether a greater folly and madness can be imagined, than for men to profess in good earnest to believe, that there is a day shortly coming, wherein they shall appear before the impartial tribunal of the great judge of the world, and all the actions of their lives shall be ranfack'd and laid open, and that there is not any thing that ever they did, that shall escape a severe censure; yea, and farther to be persuaded, that as it shall upon that trial appear, that they have demeaned themselves in this world, they shall be sentenced to an eternal and unchangeable State, of happiness or misery, in the other world; and yet after all this conviction, to live at such a mad and careless rate, as no man in reason can live, but he that is undoubtedly certain of the contrary of all this, and verily persuaded in his heart, that not one syllable of what the gospel says concerning these matters, is true? This is so incredible a stupidity and folly, that did not frequent and undeniable experience make us sure of the truth of it, out of mere charity and respect to human nature, it were not to be believed. *Consider this all ye that forget God, and put far from you the evil day; consider and shew your selves men, O ye transgressors!* who profess to believe a future judgment, and yet run the hazard of it, as if ye had no fear and suspicion of any such thing.

II. Having considered, not without wonder and astonishment, what manner of persons the generality of men are, notwithstanding all the assurance we have of a future judgment, let us in the next place consider, *seeing these things shall be, what manner of persons we ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, waiting for and hastning unto the coming of the day of God,* as the Apostle argues, *2 Pet. iii. 11, 12.* How should the serious belief of this great principle of religion work upon us, that *we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil?* St. Paul tells us, that the consideration of it had a mighty awe and influence upon him, to be careful of himself, and to be concern'd for others: to be careful of himself, in the verse before the text, *Wherefore we labour that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him: for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.* And to be concerned for others, that they may prevent the terrors of that day, in the verse immediately after the text, *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.* *Knowing the terror of the Lord;* it were no difficult matter to make such a dreadful representation of this great and terrible day of the Lord, as would affright the stoutest sinner, and make every joint of him to tremble: but it is much more desirable that men should be wrought upon by reason, and convinc'd and persuaded by a calm and sober consideration of things; because that is likely to have a

better and more lasting effect than present terror and amazement; and therefore I shall content myself with the naked representation of the thing in the plain and powerful expressions of the holy Scriptures. Imagine then thou sawest *the son of man coming in great power, and great glory, and all his holy angels with him*; that thou heardest the great trumpet sound, and a mighty voice piercing the heavens and the earth, saying, *Arise ye dead, and come to judgment*. Suppose thou sawest *the thrones set, and the great judge sitting upon the throne of his glory, and all nations gather'd before him, and all the dead both small and great standing before God, the books opened, and the dead judged out of the things written in these books*; and the several sentences pronounced from the mouth of Christ himself, *Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world*; and, *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. Would not this be a dreadful and amazing sight! Why, the gospel plainly declares that all this shall be, and thou professest to believe it. Why then dost thou not live as if thou didst believe these things? Why should not that which will certainly be, have to all reasonable purposes the same effect upon thee, as if it were already and actually present? Why do men suffer themselves to be diverted from the attentive consideration of so important a matter, by the impertinent trifles of this world? Why do we not make wise and speedy preparation for *that day, which will certainly come*? But we are uncertain when it will come, for *it will come as a thief in the night, and as a snare upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth*. Why dost thou stifle thy conscience, and drown the loud cry of it, with the din and noise of worldly business; Why dost thou at any time check and suppress the thoughts of a future judgment, and *put far from thee the evil day*? And not rather suffer the terrors of it to haunt and pursue thee, till they have made thee weary of thy wicked life, till they have reclaimed thee to thy duty, and effectually persuaded thee *to break off thy sins by repentance*; and to resolve upon such a holy and virtuous course of life, that thou mayst be able not only with peace and comfort, but with joy and triumph to entertain the thoughts of that day?

Reason thus with thy self, If this day be so dreadful at a distance, that I can hardly now bear the thoughts of it, how insupportable will the thing it self be, when it comes to be present? And it will come never the less, nor the later, for my not thinking of it, is it not reasonable, instead of putting away the thoughts of it, to endeavour by all possible means to prevent the terrors of it?

We especially, who profess our selves Christians, and live in the clear light of the gospel, ought to consider, that we cannot plead ignorance for our excuse, as the heathen world might. We read and hear the gospel every day, *wherein the wrath of God is clearly reveal'd against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*; so that if we continue impenitent, we have no cloke, no excuse for our selves: wo unto us above all others! *It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for us*. The times of ignorance, saith St. Paul, speaking of the heathen world, *the times of this ignorance God winked at*; but now he commands all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Thus much concerning the general proposition, the certainty of a future judgment.

S E R M O N CXXV.

Of the Person by whom the World shall be judged.

2 C O R. v. 10.

The second
Sermon on
this Text.

For we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

IN these words, besides the general point mainly intended, concerning the certainty of a future and general judgment, there are likewise several particular propositions.

First, That the administration of this judgment, is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, That all men are liable to this judgment.

Thirdly, That all the actions which men have done in this life, shall then come to account, and they shall be judged for them.

Fourthly, That this sentence shall be pass'd upon men, according to the nature and quality of their actions, whether good or evil. I have handled the general point, the certainty of a future judgment: I shall now proceed to the particular propositions contained in the text, and shall handle them in the order in which I have proposed them.

First, That the administration of this judgment is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he is the person constituted and ordained of God, to be the judge of the world. The tribunal before which we must stand, is here in the text called *the judgment-seat of Christ*. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ*. In the prosecution of this I shall,

First, Endeavour to confirm and illustrate the truth of this proposition.

Secondly, Draw some inferences from it, by way of application.

First, For the confirmation of it, I shall do these *two* things:

I. Prove it from clear testimony of scripture.

II. Endeavour to give some account of this œconomy, and dispensation; why God had committed the administration of this great work to the Lord Jesus Christ; in all which I shall rely only upon scripture, the thing being capable of no other proof or evidence. And indeed, the whole mediatory undertaking of our blessed Saviour, and all the circumstances of it, are matter of pure revelation; this is the *hidden and manifold wisdom of God, which none of the princes and philosophers of this world knew*, and which we could not possibly have found out and discovered, had not God been pleased to reveal it to us.

I. I shall prove this from express testimony of scripture, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the person constituted and ordained by God, to administer the judgment of the great day. Matth. xiii. 40, 41, 42, 43. *So shall it be in the end of this world. The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father.* Here our Saviour is represented as the chief minister of God's justice, in the distribution of rewards to the righteous and the wicked; and tho' the effect and execution of the sentence only be express'd, yet it supposeth a judicial process preceding. So likewise Matth. xvi. 27. *For the son of man shall come in the glory of his father, with his holy angels, and then he shall*

shall reward every man according to his work. Shall come in the glory of his Father, that is, with his authority committed to him. *Matth. xxiv. 30.* where our Saviour speaking of his coming to judge the world, it is said, *Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; that is, in order to the judgment of the world.* But most fully and expressly, *Matth. xxv. 31.* where you have the manner of his coming particularly described, together with the solemn representation of the process of that great day. *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, &c.* You see the whole administration of this judgment, and the management of every part of it, is committed to Christ. *John v. 22.* Our Saviour there produceth his commission, and tells us from whence this authority was derived to him: *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.* And *v. 27.* *He hath given him authority also to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.* *Acts x. 42.* *And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he that is ordained of God, to be the judge of the quick and dead.* *Acts xvii. 31.* *He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, that is, by Jesus Christ; for it follows, Whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* *Rom. ii. 16.* *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.* *Rom. xiv. 10.* *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.* *2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9.* The Apostle there speaking of the day of judgment, describes it thus: *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* *2 Tim. iv. 1.* *I charge thee, saith St. Paul there to Timothy, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom.* *Rev. xxii. 12.* *Behold I come quickly, saith our Lord, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.* I proceed to the

II. Thing I proposed, namely, to give some account why God hath committed the administration of this work into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. And of this, I shall give an account in these two particulars:

1. God thought fit to confer this honour upon Christ, as a suitable reward of his patience and sufferings.

2. He thought fit likewise hereby to declare the righteousness and equity of his judgment, in that mankind is judged by one in their own nature, a man like themselves.

1. God hath thought fit to confer this honour upon Christ, as a suitable reward of his obedience and sufferings, of his coming into the world by his appointment, to undertake the work of our redemption, and to mediate a reconciliation between God and us, of his voluntary submission to a condition so mean and low, to that poverty and contempt, and to those extreme sufferings which he did so patiently undergo, in the prosecution of this great design.

That God hath committed all power to Christ, with design to put an honour upon him, our Saviour himself tells us, *John v. 22, 23.* *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.* The Scripture speaks of this matter, as if when Christ undertook the great work of our redemption, it were expressly covenanted between God the Father and him, that he should undertake this work, and submit to all those grievous things, which were necessary to be done and suffer'd, in order to the effecting of it; and that when he had accomplished it, God would confer this glory upon him, that in his human nature he should be exalted to the right hand of God, and have power given him over all flesh, to judge the world, and to give eternal life to as many as he pleased;

pleased; and when he had received this reward, that then this Mediator Office should cease, and he should resign up the kingdom to God the Father, that God might be all in all. This is the scope and design of the several texts of scripture concerning this matter.

With relation to this covenant and agreement between him and his father, he prays, *John xvii. 1, 2.* that he would not be unmindful of the glory which he had promised to invest him withal. *Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* And *v. 4, 5.* *I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do.* And then he claims the reward of it. *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self.* And the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, chap. *xii. 2.* tells us, that the hopes of this did encourage, and bear up our Lord under his sufferings, *Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* And St. Peter tells us, *1 Pet. i. 11.* that the prophets of old testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. And St. Paul tells us what this glory is, *Eph. i. 20, 21.* viz. *That God hath set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.* But most expressly, *Phil. ii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.* the same Apostle tells us, that in consideration of the great humiliation and sufferings of Christ, God hath highly exalted him. *He made himself of no reputation, (he emptied himself) and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.* And that the giving of this name and authority to Christ, upon account whereof all creatures shall be subject to him, doth principally import that power of judging the world which was committed to him, is evident from the explication of these phrases, of *bowing the knee to Christ*, and of *confessing to him with the tongue*, which the same Apostle tells us elsewhere do signify our being judged by him. *Rom. xiv. 10, 11.* *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ: for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.* So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.

So that you see that the glorious reward of Christ's self-denial and suffering, doth principally consist in having the judgment of the world committed to him, which therefore is called *his kingdom*, *Matt. xvi. 28.* where our Saviour expresseth it by *the Son of Man's coming in his kingdom.* *2 Tim. 4. 1.* *I charge thee therefore, saith St. Paul to Timothy, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom.* And it is with relation to this power and authority, that the title of *King* is given to him, *Matth. xxv. 34.* *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, &c.* And the scripture almost every where, when it speaks of Christ's coming, calls it his *glorious appearance.* *Matth. xvi. 27.* *They shall see the Son of man coming in the glory of his Father.* *Matth. xxiv. 30.* *They shall see the Son of man coming with power and great glory.* *Matth. xxv. 31.* *When the Son of man shall come in his glory.* And *Tit. ii. 13.* it is called, *The glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

And this is a very suitable reward of his great submission and sufferings, that he who lived in so mean and obscure a condition, should come in great glory; that he who was rejected and despised of men, should be attended on by mighty angels; that he who was arraigned and condemned by the powers of the world, should have authority given him to summon all, both small and great, the kings and great men, and judges of the earth, to appear at his bar, and to receive sentence at his mouth.

And this shall be the last act of his Mediatorship, to sit in judgment upon the world, to distribute rewards to his faithful servants, and to punish his obstinate and

and implacable enemies. And when this work is finished, then this authority shall expire, and the office and kingdom of the mediator shall cease; for *when he shall have subdued all things to himself*, as the Apostle expressly tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, &c. *Then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom of God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the son also himself be subject unto him that hath put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

2. God hath committed the administration of this judgment to Christ, that he might hereby declare the righteousness and equity of it, in that mankind is judged by one in their own nature, a man like themselves. And therefore we find that the scripture, when it speaks of Christ, as judge of the world, doth almost constantly call him *man* and *the son of man*. In the places I have mentioned before, *Matth. xiii. 41. The son of man shall send forth his angels. And Matth. xvi. 27. The son of man shall come in the glory of his Father. Matth. xxiv. 30. Then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven, and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. Matth. xxv. 31. When the son of man shall come in his glory. Acts xvii. 31. He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world with righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.* By the constant use of which expression, the scripture doth give us plainly to understand, that this great honour of being judge of the world, was conferred upon the human nature of Christ. For as he is God, he is over all, and judge of the world, and could not derive this power from any, it being originally inherent in the deity. Which likewise appears in those expressions of his being *ordained a judge*, and having *all authority and judgment committed and given to him. Acts xvii. 31. He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained. And John v. 22. The Father hath committed all judgment to the son. And ver. 27. He hath given him authority to execute judgment.* Now this cannot be said of Christ as God, but in respect of his human nature. And this is clear beyond all exception, by what our Saviour adds, as a reason why this authority is committed to him; *He hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the son of man*; that is, because in that respect, and no other, he is capable of having this authority derived to him; for as he is *the son of God*, he hath it in himself. And perhaps for this reason likewise, because in respect of his human nature, he is visible; a man being part of the visible creation of God, and the judgment of the great day being to be administer'd in a visible manner, and to that end the bodies of men to be raised and united to their souls, in order to their visible appearance at this judgment; it seems very congruous, that *the son of man*, clothed in our nature, and invested with a human body, should sit in judgment upon mankind.

But principally because nothing can more effectually declare the equity of this judgment, and that it shall be administer'd *in righteousness*, than that God hath *ordained a man* like our selves to sit in judgment upon us. In human judgments, it is reckoned a great piece of equity, for men to be tried by their peers, to be acquitted or condemn'd by those, who are as near as may be to them, and in the same circumstances of rank and condition with themselves; because such are like to understand their cases best, and to have a fair and equitable consideration of all the circumstances belonging to it. Now Christ, as he is *the son of man*, is near to us, *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, made in all things like unto us, only without sin*; which was necessary to qualify him to be our judge; he dwelt among us, and understands all our circumstances, and whatever may have influence upon our case, to extenuate or aggravate our guilt. What the Apostle to the Hebrews says of Christ as an *high-priest*, may be applied to him as a judge, *Heb. iv. 15. We have not a judge, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

That which now remains, is to draw some inferences from what I have discoursed to you upon this argument.

1. If the Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the world, and we must *all appear before his judgment-seat*, then it greatly concerns every one of us so to demean our selves in this world, that we may be accepted of him in the next. If a man be to be tried for his life, how will he court the favour of the judge, that when he comes to stand at his bar, he may receive a gracious sentence from his mouth? Why, there is a day certainly coming, when every one of us must appear before the tribunal of the great judge of the world; and therefore we should with all possible care and diligence endeavour to approve our consciences, and all the actions of our lives to him. *Wherefore we labour, saith the Apostle immediately before my text, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.* This is that which makes his acceptance and approbation so valuable and considerable, that he is to be our judge, to him we must stand or fall, by his sentence we shall be cast or cleared for ever.

We are very apt to court the favour of great men, of the princes and judges of this world, that when we come to stand in need of it, we may have the benefit and comfort of it. But this is not our great interest; for the sentence that men can pass upon us, doth but operate for a little while, the effect and consequences of it do not reach beyond this world; it is not final and conclusive as to our eternal state. To allude to that saying of Solomon's, *many seek the prince's favour; but every man's judgment is of the Lord.* We seek the favour of the great men of this world; but there is a greater man than any of these, whom we are apt to despise and neglect, *the prince of the kings of the earth, the man who is ordained of God, to be judge both of quick and dead.*

Every man's judgment shall be from him, 'tis his sentence which above all other we have most reason to desire or dread. Therefore we should have regard to him, and by submitting to his scepter, and yielding a willing obedience to the laws of his holy gospel, seek his favour, lest *he break us with a rod of iron, and dash us in pieces like a potter's vessel.* This advice we find given to the kings and rulers of the earth, Psal. ii. 10, 11, 12. *Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; and be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

2. This is matter of great comfort to all sincere christians, that Christ shall judge the world; as it likewise is of great terror to all that disobey the gospel, and by their wicked lives confute their profession, and pretended belief of it. Christ is *the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him*, and to none else. He hath not only purchased this salvation for us, but by a publick and solemn, and authoritative sentence, will confer it upon us.

Indeed it is justly matter of great terror to the wicked of the world, who live in ungodliness and worldly lusts, and under the name and title of christians, have *trampled under foot the son of God*, and by their lives have openly declared, that *they would not have this man rule over them.* Sure it cannot but be matter of great horror and amazement to such persons, to think of this judge, and to consider, that he, whom by their leud lives and practices they have so contemned in this world, will sit as judge upon them, and condemn them in the next. And therefore our Saviour tells us, Luke xxi. 25. &c. that when the day of judgment shall surprize the world, and *they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*; then the wicked of the earth shall be in great distress and perplexity, and *their hearts shall fail them with fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth*; but that to good men it shall be a day of great joy, and that the approach of it shall revive their spirits, and raise their heads, ver. 28. *But when these things shall begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads with joy, because your redemption draws nigh.*

And this consideration is matter of great comfort to all good men, both upon account of their sufferings and services for Christ. In respect of their sufferings for him. In this world they are exposed to great trials and persecutions for him: but he, for whose name we suffer, is to give us our reward; he, who is of the same

same nature with us, and *took part of flesh and blood*, and *suffer'd himself in the flesh*, more grievously than any of us can suffer; he it is to whom God hath refer'd it, to consider our sufferings, and give what rewards to them he thinks fit. And then in respect of our services; tho' the best of them be imperfect, and nothing that we do is able to abide the severity of his justice, yet by virtue of his meritorious sacrifice and satisfaction, the imperfection of them is pardoned, and the sincerity of them is accepted. For he being our *judge*, who was our *sacrifice*, and is our *advocate with the father*, we may rest assured, that he will plead our cause for us, and the merit of his own sufferings, in bar of that sentence which strict justice would pass upon us.

3. And lastly, this shews what reason the ministers of Christ have to be earnest and importunate with sinners, to repent and turn to God, to believe and obey the gospel of Christ, that they may have him their friend, who will certainly be their judge. This inference the Apostle makes from this doctrine, in the words immediately after the text; *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*; we who are employed by Christ, to warn sinners of the danger and terror of a future judgment, who are *Ambassadors* sent from this great king and judge of the world, to treat with sinners, and to offer peace to them, and in *Christ's* stead to beseech them to be reconciled to God, as the Apostle speaks in the latter part of this chapter. So that if we ourselves believe what we preach to others, to be the word and law of him who shall shortly judge us, and them that hear us, can we forbear with all possible importunity to solicit their repentance, and to warn them to *flee from the wrath which is to come*? Can we let them sleep in their sins, when we see them neglect so great a happiness, and run themselves upon so intolerable a misery? If we believe that holy book out of which we preach, and the discoveries and revelation there made, we may take an easy prospect of another world, and see *the wrath of God revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. For the gospel hath made a more particular and clear discovery to us of the state of the next world, and the proceedings of the great day, than ever the world was acquainted with before. It tells us who is the person that shall sit in judgment upon us, even *Jesus Christ, whereof God hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*. Now if we know this, and be assured of it, we cannot but deal plainly with sinners, and out of tender pity and compassion to them, endeavour to make them sensible of the sad issue and event of a wicked life, and that without repentance and amendment, they will not be able to stand in the judgment of the great day. When we see men in the high-way to ruin and destruction, and the evil day making haste towards them, we cannot but warn them of that sad fate which hangs over them, and endeavour by all means to rescue them from that extreme and endless misery, which is ready to overtake them.

Consider then, sinner, whom it is thou now rejectest and despisest, and whose laws thou castest behind thy back. It is he who, for all his mean appearance in the world, is the *Lord of glory*, into whose hand the *father hath committed all judgment*. And can there be a greater madness than to provoke and make him thine enemy, who shall be thy judge? than to despise him, who can destroy thee? He appeared once as *a lamb to take away the sins of the world*; but if through our obstinacy and impenitency we render this appearance of his ineffectual for our recovery, he will appear a second time in a more terrible manner, as *a lion to tear us in pieces*. He came once as *a light into the world*; in a still and gentle way, to convince and convert sinners: but if we resist this light, he will come in *flaming fire to take vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of his son*.

And this is that which will make us speechless, and fill our faces with everlasting confusion, at the second coming of Christ, that we have frustrated and made void the end of his first coming. What shall we be able to say to him when he comes to judge us, who rejected him when he came to save us? With what reason can we hope that he will deliver us from hell, when we would not be *saved by him from our sins, and redeemed from our vain conversation*?

I will conclude all with that merciful warning which the judge himself hath given us, and left upon record, *Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36. Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man.*

S E R M O N CXXVI.

Of the Persons who are to be judged.

2 COR. V. 10.

The third Sermon on this Text. For we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

I Proceed to the *second* proposition contained in the words, *viz.* That all men are liable to this judgment, and that no man that ever lived in the world, except our blessed Saviour the judge himself, shall be exempted from it. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.*

I shall *first* endeavour to illustrate and confirm the truth of this proposition; and then apply it to our selves.

First, For the confirmation of it. This I shall endeavour to do from express testimonies of scripture: and then by arguments drawn from reason and scripture together.

I. I shall endeavour to confirm the truth of this point from express testimonies of scripture. And we find that the scripture useth words of the greatest latitude and extent, to express this matter more emphatically to us. *Gen. xviii. 25. God is call'd the judge of the earth. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Matth. xxv. 32. 'tis said, that when Christ shall sit upon the throne of his glory, all nations shall be gathered before him. Acts x. 42. he is said to be ordained of God to be judge of quick and dead. And so likewise, 1 Pet. iv. 5. Who shall give an account to him, who is ready to judge the quick and the dead?* This expression is purposely used to take in all persons that have ever lived in the world; not only those that shall be already dead at the coming of Christ, but those that shall be found alive at his coming, who tho' they shall not die, yet they shall undergo a sudden and equivalent change, as St. Paul tells us from particular revelation, *1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. Behold, I shew you a mystery: we shall not all sleep; that is, we shall not all die, and sleep in the grave, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed;)* that is, they that are already dead shall be then raised, and their corruptible bodies changed into incorruptible; and they that shall be found alive, tho' they shall not die, yet their bodies shall undergo the same change with those that are raised. And this is the reason why Christ is often in scripture call'd, *The judge of quick and dead.*

But to proceed to other texts. *Acts xvii. 31. He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness. The world, that is, all men that ever lived in it. He commands all men, every where to repent, because he will judge all men. Rom. xiv. 10, 11, 12. We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; for it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God. Heb. ix. 27. It is appointed for all men once to die, and*
after

after this the judgment. That is, as death shall pass upon all men, or a change equivalent to it, so after death the judgment shall pass upon the same persons; *Heb. xii. 23. And to God the judge of all. 1 Pet. i. 17. If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth every man, according to his works.*

And to express this the more fully, the scripture reckons up the several ranks and conditions of men, to shew that none shall be exempted. *Rev. vi. 15, 16, 17.* where you have a representation of the day of judgment, and several sorts of men in vain endeavouring to hide themselves from it, and escape it: *And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?* Which words are a lively representation of the universal appearance, that all persons in the world, of all ranks and conditions, must make before God at that great day. If any be exempted, they must either be secur'd by their power and interest, or overlook'd for their meanness and inconsiderableness; but none shall either be priviledg'd, for their greatness, or neglected for their meanness. If any can pretend to be priviledg'd, it must be those of greatest dignity and authority, *the kings and great men:* or of the greatest esteem, *the rich men of the earth;* or of the greatest strength and power, *the chief captains and the mighty men:* but these have no protection against the arrest of that judgment. Nor shall any be overlook'd for their meanness. If any sort of men be contemptible and inconsiderable, it must be those who are in the lowest condition of debasement, *bondmen and slaves:* but *every bondman,* as well as *every freeman,* shall be brought before this tribunal. And so likewise, *Rev. xx. 12, 13.* where all persons are distributed into two ranks *small and great. I saw the dead both small and great, standing before God, and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in those books, and the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and the grave gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.* You see the whole world is ranack'd and search'd, *sea and land,* that none may escape this judgment. For which reason it seems to be called by the apostle *St. Jude, ver. 6. the judgment of the great day;* for that will be a *great day* indeed, in which all men that ever lived in the world shall appear and receive their trial.

The sum of all is this: that all persons that ever were upon the face of the earth, none excepted, of what sex or age, of what rank or quality, of what country or nation, in what times or places soever they were born or lived; high or low, rich or poor, knowing or ignorant, good or bad, young or old, the greatest princes and potentates, as well as the meanest subjects and slaves: the deepest statesmen and politicians, the learned clerks and disputers of this world, as well as the idiots and the simple; in short all, without any distinction or exception, without any privilege or respect of persons, shall at this great day appear before this high tribunal, and give an account of themselves, and all their actions, and receive the proper doom and sentence respectively due to them. I proceed to the

II. Thing I propos'd; which was to confirm this yet farther by arguments drawn from reason and scripture together. And this will appear, whether we consider the nature of man, or the nature of God. And,

1. If we consider the nature of man: We are all God's creatures, who have received all that we have from him, and depend wholly upon him, and are entirely subject to him, to be governed by such laws as he hath prescribed to us, and to be accountable to him for our observance or violation of them; all this is essentially included in the nature of a reasonable creature, and as such we all stand equally related to him. As we are creatures, we are not our own, but wholly another's, and perfectly at the disposal of him who made us, and from whom we received all that we have: and as we are reasonable creatures, we are all equally endowed with free choice and power over our actions; by the good or bad

use whereof we are capable of doing well or ill, and consequently of deserving well or ill for our doings, and of receiving rewards and punishments accordingly: we are all capable of being govern'd by laws, and therefore under the authority of God, as our lawgiver, and liable and accountable to him as our judge.

And all this is necessary and universal, because it is consequent upon the condition of our nature and being; and whoever pretends to be exempted from the judgment of God, he must exempt himself out of the creation of God, he must deny the God that made him, and renounce his relation to him as a creature, must disclaim his dependance upon him, and subjection to him; he must withdraw himself from the authority and jurisdiction of the universal king of the world, and declare that he hath nothing to do to rule over him, that he doth not stand obliged to him for his being, nor did receive from him those talents of life, and health, and reason, and other blessings which he enjoys, and consequently that he is not concerned to make any improvements of them, being accountable to none for the good or bad use of them.

Now if any man can think thus, that he is none of God's creatures and subjects, he may hope to decline and escape his judgments: but every man that owns God for his creator and sovereign, must yield himself to be subject to his laws, and liable to his judgment. Upon this account the Apostle St. Paul concludes all the world, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, to be liable to the judgment of God; because they are all equally subject to his laws. Rom. iii. 19. *Now we know, says he, that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world, that is, both Jews and Gentiles, may become guilty before God.* In the Greek it is *ὑπόδικος γένηται τῷ Θεῷ*, that all the world may be subject, or liable to the judgment of God. Now tho' this be immediately spoken of the Jews, who were under a written law; yet he had told us before in what sense the Gentiles also, as well as the Jews, are under the law of God, Chap. 2. 14. *For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law to themselves, shewing the work (or effect) of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing them witness, and their thoughts in the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.* His meaning is, that there is no person in the world, but, tho' he hath not the knowledge of divine revelation, and that law of God which is written in the scriptures; yet he hath the light of natural conscience, he hath a law which is born within him, enacted, as I may say, in his very nature, and written upon his heart; which will acquaint him with the material parts, and great lines of his duty; and by virtue of this law he is obnoxious to the judgment of God, and stands accountable to him for all his breaches and violations of it. So that from the common nature of man, and that which is essential to all men, it is evident that we are all equally liable to the judgment of God.

2. If we consider the nature of God, who is impartially just, and no acceptor of persons, this likewise will furnish us with an argument for the proof of this truth, that none shall be exempted from the judgment of God. Justice requires that every one should have that which of due belongs to him: but of due it belongs to every reasonable creature, to give an account of himself, and of his actions, to the great judge of the world: and to exempt any from this account, would be partiality, and that which the Scripture calls *προσωποληψία*, respect or acceptation of persons, and which the scripture doth every where remove at the greatest distance from God. Deut. x. 17. *The Lord your God is Lord of lords, and God of gods; a great God, mighty and terrible, he regardeth not persons.* 2 Chron. xix. 7. *There is no iniquity with the Lord your God, nor accepting of persons.* Job. xxxiv. 18, 19. speaking of the impartial justice of God says, *He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor accepteth the rich more than the poor: for they are all the work of his hands.* 1 Pet. i. 17. *If we call on the father, who without respect of persons judgeth every man.*

Now respect of persons is, in the distribution of justice, to have respect to some qualities and circumstances of persons, which do not at all appertain to the merits of the cause, and upon that account do deal unequally with those whose

cases

cases otherwise are equal. As when two persons are equally guilty, and obnoxious to the law, to bring one upon his trial and condemn him, but to exempt the other from justice; or if he come upon his trial, to absolve and acquit him upon some account of relation, or interest, or friendship; or because he is rich and powerful, the other mean and poor; or upon any other account besides the pure merits of the cause. Now the impartial and inflexible justice of the divine nature is such, that he is not to be moved and wrought upon by any consideration whatsoever, to exempt any person from appearing at his bar, and receiving his trial there, and having judgment pass'd upon him, according as upon trial his cause shall appear to be. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.* No person whatever, of what condition soever, shall be exempted from it.

All that now remains is to apply this to our selves, and that in these following particulars:

I. From what has been said, we learn that this doctrine of a future judgment equally concerns every one of us, and ought in reason to have the like influence upon us, because we are all of us, without difference or exception, equally liable to the judgment of God; not one of us, of what age or quality, or condition soever, shall be exempted from it. Whoever thou art, how great, or rich, or powerful soever, though never so big and considerable among men, thou shalt not escape the judgment of God. It may be thou art a prince and bearest rule over others: but thou also art liable to the judgment of God, and therefore oughtest to remember, that *they that rule over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God*, and of that great account which they must one day give of that high charge committed to them. It may be now thou judgest others, and can'st call them before thy bar, and make them tremble, having power and authority to absolve or condemn them: But remember, that for all this thou must come into judgment thy self, and give an account how thou hast judged others, and whether thou hast sat and proceeded in these inferior courts, as one mindful of the high tribunal of God, and with a just sense of the judgment of the great day, when all the causes which thou hast tried here upon earth, will be reviewed and severely scann'd in that higher court, from which there can be no appeal.

It may be thou art rich and powerful, and one of those great flies that can break through the cobwebs of human laws, and escape the judgment of them: But the judgment of God will take fast hold of thee, and in despite of all thy interest and might, will take a severe revenge upon thee. As powerful as thou art, thou art but a man, and God is infinitely too strong for thee, thou can'st not escape out of his hands. *Thinkest thou, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?* says the Apostle; looking upon it as a foolish and absurd imagination, for any man to think, that he can by any means avoid the judgment of God.

So that so long as we are *men*, whatever else we are, we ought to stand in awe of the judgment of the great day; because, let our rank and condition be what it will, we are all equally obnoxious to that, and can upon no account whatsoever plead any privilege or exemption from it.

II. The consideration of this confounds all those differences and distinctions of men, which make such a noise in this world; and whatever they may signify in this world, makes them very inconsiderable as to the other. Why then should men be puffed up, and look so big upon account of any of these things, when there is a day not far off, and which will certainly, and for ought we know, shortly overtake us, which will level men in all these respects, and set them upon even ground, before an impartial bar; where none of these things will be had in any consideration, and where the foolish pride and arrogance of men shall be confounded; and those who were wont to look down with so much scorn upon others, as so infinitely below them, shall find themselves upon an equal level with the poorest and most abject part of mankind, and shall be ready to say with the wise man in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, chap. v. 8. *What hath pride profited us, or what hath riches with our vaunting brought us? All these things are passed away as a shadow, and as a post that hasteth by.* So that we ought to use well all those advantages which we have above others in this world; if we do not, they will be of no use and benefit to us in the other. *Riches profit not in the day of wrath.*

All these petty civil differences and discriminations of high and low, rich and poor, honourable and base, they only hold in this world, and are in vogue on this side the grave: but when we come into the other world, they will all cease and signify nothing. There the powerful oppressor can do nothing to the injury of the poorest man that ever lived in this world, and as little to his own safety and security. All that power and interest which is now so considerable, and makes its way every where, and does what it pleaseth, will be of no use and significance in the other world. The great and the mighty, when death hath once arrested them, and bound them over to the judgment of the great day, their glory and strength departs from them, and they are then but like other men. *Job* elegantly describes the State of men after death, *Job* iii. 17, 18, 19. *There the wicked cease from troubling: and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master.* While we are upon the stage of this world, we sustain several persons; one is a prince and a great man, another is a captain and a mighty man; and whilst this life lasts, these differences are considerable. But when we retire and go off the stage, we shall then be undress'd, we shall be stript of all our titles, and of all our glory, and go out of the world as naked as we came into it. Death and judgment level all mankind, and when we come to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, we shall all stand upon equal terms. For God respects not the persons of the mighty in judgment, he will shew no reverence to the great ones of this world, but will deal impartially and alike with all. *Matth.* xxv. 32. You may there see how the judge himself represents the universality and impartiality of his dealings with men in that day: *Before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.* All mankind shall then be gathered into one common flock, among which there shall no other distinction be made, but of *sheep* and *goats*; the separation which shall then be made, shall not be of the high from the low, of the rich from the poor, of the honourable from the base, of the learned from the ignorant; there shall be but one distinction then made, of the good from the bad, and the righteous from the wicked; there shall no consideration be then had, but only of the moral differences of men; all civil difference will then vanish and be of no account in that day, either to exempt any man from that judgment, or to gain any favour and respect to him in the hearing or decision of his cause. This should make all men very modest and humble in this world, to consider how they shall be levell'd in the next.

III. How should the consideration of this dash all our sensual mirth and jollity, and put a damp upon our spirits, when they are too light and vainly transported with the pleasures and delights of this world! If a man be to prepare himself to be tried for his life after a few days, how will he look about him! With what care and seriousness will he provide for so solemn an occasion, and neglect nothing that may stand him in stead, and help to bring him off when he shall receive his trial! The thoughts of this will spoil all his mirth, and turn the lightness of his spirit into sober sadness. Much more ought the consideration of a judgment infinitely more terrible, and in the consequence of it, of far greater concernment to us, to compose our minds into a serious frame. For if we believe a future and general judgment, and that none of us can by any means possibly escape it, then certainly it highly concerns every one of us to be serious, and to pass the time of this life in a perpetual awe of it. So *St. Peter* argues from this consideration, *1 Pet.* i. 17. *And if ye call on the father, who without respect of persons judgeth every man, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* This thought should interpose it self in all our mirth, that *we must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.* And therefore *Solomon* admonisheth young men, in the midst of their sports and pleasures, to think of a future account; *Eccles.* xi. 9. *Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

IV. And lastly, From hence we learn, that the business of religion does equally concern every man. For if we must all be judged, we are all concerned to prepare and provide for it: and a religious and virtuous life is the only preparation

ration for it. How should we order our lives with a respect to this great and general affize, when every one of us shall be brought upon his trial, and stand at the bar of God to be judged by him? Many live as if they thought the business of religion below them, and not at all appertaining to them: but if the judgment of God will equally reach all persons, then I am sure it equally concerns all to mind religion, and a holy and virtuous life; for that alone will make us *worthy*, as our Saviour himself expresseth it, *to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man.*

And this is the result of Solomon's enquiry, and of his long discourse upon that argument, what is the great work and business, the great interest and concernment of men in this life; which we find in the conclusion of his Sermon, call'd, *The book of the preacher*, Eccl. xii. 13, 14. *Let us, says he, hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.* Religion is the great business and concernment of men in this world, because God will bring every man, and every work into judgment, whether it be good or evil.

S E R M O N CXXVII.

Of the Actions for which men will be accountable.

2 C O R. v. 10.

For we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The fourth Sermon on this Text.

I Proceed to the *third* proposition contained in these words, *viz.* that all the actions which men have done in this life shall then come to account, and men shall be judged for them. *That every man may receive the things done in the body,* τὰ ἰδια τῷ σώματι, *the things proper and due to the body;* so some very good copies have it: and then the meaning will be, that every one may receive the reward due to him; the word *body*, by a frequent *hebraism*, being put for *the person*: as if he had said, *the reward due to himself*, according to the actions he hath done in this life, good or bad. But in most copies it is, τὰ δια τῷ σώματι, *the things done in, or by, the body*, as our translation renders it, that every one may receive a reward of the actions which he hath done in this life; and then this phrase doth import what it is that shall be the matter of our account at the day of judgment, *viz.* *The things done in the body;* that is, all the actions of this life, while we are in this world, in this state of union of the soul and body.

Whether there be any peculiar emphasis in this phrase, τὰ δια τῷ σώματι, *the things done by, or in the body*, as if it did exclude those things which shall be done after death, in the state of separation of our souls from our bodies, from being accounted for at the resurrection in the day of judgment; I say, whether there be any such emphasis in those words, *The things done in the body*, I cannot certainly affirm; tho', according to the nature and reason of the thing, it seems very probable, as the school-men have generally determined in this case, that *meritum est viatoris*, *merit and demerit are proper to this state of trial;* and that wicked men when they are in *termino*, and their state is finally concluded, and the trial of their obedience is at an end, do not demerit by their sins, nor increase their punishment. For altho' that hatred and enmity of God which is in the damned spirits, be a monstrous irregularity in a creature, yet it cannot well in reason be otherwise, but that a creature, which is extremely miserable, and withal desperate, and past all hopes of remedy and recovery out of that

that dismal state; I say, it cannot well in reason be otherwise expected, but that a creature in such a condition should rage against the author of its torment and punishment, and do all the despite to him that he can, and wish that he were not, tho' it be in vain to wish so; and it seems probable that God will not bring this to a new account, because it seems so natural and necessary a consequent of a miserable and desperate state: but tho' all this be probable, I am far from being peremptory in it, much less am I confident that it is the meaning of this phrase here in the text; I do not love to build an opinion upon a single and doubtful phrase of scripture. I only mention it by the by, not intending to insist upon it, being much of his mind, who said, *Non amo nimis argutam theologiam, I am no lover of great subtilty and nicety in divinity.*

It is sufficient to my purpose, that this phrase of *every man's receiving the things done in the body*, does at least import thus much, that we shall be accountable at the day of judgment, for all the actions that we have done in this life, and receive the due recompence and reward of them; which is the proposition I intend as briefly as I can to illustrate and confirm.

And, *First*, For the illustration of this point, I shall instance in the several heads of action, as they take their difference and variety from the principle, or matter, or object, or other circumstances of them. We must render an account to this great judge for our inward as well as outward actions; for the acts of our minds, and every thought springing up there, especially if it be cherish'd and entertained by us; for all our secret designs, purposes and intentions, as well as for the words which we speak, and the outward actions which we do: whatever we have thought and design'd, spoken and declared, accomplish'd and done, will then be consider'd and examin'd, and we shall be judged for it. We must likewise give an account of all our civil as well as religious actions, of our behaviour toward men in all our dealing and intercourse with them, as well as of our demeanour toward God in the duties of his more immediate worship and service. The neglects and omissions of our duty in any kind will also come under consideration, as well as our commissions of evil, a strict account likewise will be exacted of all the talents which God hath entrusted us with, of all the abilities, opportunities and advantages we ever had of doing service to God, and good to men, and whether we have made answerable improvements of them, for the glory of God, and the benefit and advantage of men.

We must be accountable likewise for words and actions of less moment and consequence, as well as for those of greater weight and concernment; for those which were done in secret, and in the greatest darkness and privacy, as well as for those which were done in publick, and in the open view and light of the world; for the good and evil which hath been done by our selves, and in our own persons, and for what hath been done by others by our command and countenance, and from the influence of our counsel and persuasion, or example, or which we have been any ways necessary to hinder or promote; and *lastly*, for the manner and circumstances of our actions, as well as for the matter and substance of them; all these will be survey'd and strictly searched into, and weighed in an exact balance, that we may receive a reward or punishment proportionable to them.

Secondly, For the confirmation of this, I shall make it evident both from scripture and reason.

I. From scripture; which in general tells us, that *God will bring every work into judgment*; and that in order thereto, God strictly observes and takes notice of what we do; that *his eyes are upon the ways of man, and that he seeth all his goings*; that *there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves*, Job xxxiv. 21, 22. That *the ways of men, are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings*, Prov. v. 21. That *he knoweth our paths and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways*. That *there is not a word in our tongue, but he knoweth it altogether, and that he understands even our thoughts afar off*, Psal. cxxxix. 2, 3, 4. That all the actions of men are recorded in books, which shall be produced and opened at the great day, and the dead, both small and great, shall be judged from those things, which shall be written in those books, Rev. xx. 12.

And

And more particularly the scripture tells us, that those words and actions of men which seem most inconsiderable, and are most likely to be exempted, shall be accounted for, and severely scann'd and weigh'd. *Matth. xii. 36, 37.* says our Lord there, *I say unto you, that every idle word, by which if our Saviour do not mean every unprofitable, to be sure every wicked word, that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* By which saying, our Saviour designedly confutes an opinion, too current among many, that mens words signify little, and that no account will be taken of them at the day of judgment; that God will not be so severe as to make them matter of charge and accusation, and to punish us for them in the other world; and therefore to obviate this mistake, he purposely adds, *for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* And therefore men must not think, that all their lewd and filthy talk, all their rash oaths and imprecations, all their atheistical discourse, and profane jests upon religion and the holy scriptures, all their calumnies and slanders of good men, all their officious lyes to serve a present turn and occasion, will pass for nothing at the judgment of the great day. No, the judge himself hath expressly told us, that of *all such words men shall give an account in the day of judgment.* And St. Jude tells us, out of an antient Prophecy of Enoch, that *the Lord shall come with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly, not only of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, but likewise of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

Our most secret thoughts and actions also, as well as our open and publick deeds, shall then be brought upon the stage. *Eccles. xii. 14.* for God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. *Rom. ii. 16.* in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel. And this likewise is the meaning of that proverbial speech so often used by our Saviour, *there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known.* There is nothing so secret, which shall not be disclosed and made manifest in that great day of revelation, and be laid open in the face of the whole world; especially the cunning, dissimulation, and hypocrisy of men, with God and men. Men are apt to think themselves safe enough, if they can but escape the eye of men, and commit their sins secretly, and in the dark. But this is either direct atheism, or downright folly; because the eye of God is continually upon us, and *the darkness hideth not from him, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to him.* And if we be always under the inspection of our judge, if all that we think, and say, and do, be open and naked to the eye of him, *πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος,* to whom we must give an account, what will it profit us to dissemble before men, and to conceal any of our actions from them? Nay, if we could hide them from our selves, (as we cannot our wilful and deliberate sins) yet that would be of no advantage to us, because *God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things.*

And then likewise, we must be accountable to God for all the neglects and omissions of our duty, as well as for the positive commission of sin, and that in proportion to the advantages and opportunities we have had of doing more and greater good. So our Saviour tells us, that *unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required,* *Luke xii. 48.* Many are apt to think, that if they do but abstain from notorious and scandalous vices, if they do no body harm, tho' they do not serve God so fervently and constantly as others do, tho' they seldom think of him and pray to him, tho' they have no manner of activity or concernment to do good, either to the bodies or souls of men; yet that this negative virtue will serve their turn at the day of judgment. But the matter is quite otherwise, as our Saviour hath most expressly declared. *A good tree, saith he, will bring forth good fruit.* And by the parable of the foolish virgins, who for want of oil in their lamps were shut out of the kingdom of God, he declares to us the dangerous state of those who slumber away their lives in a drowsy inactivity, and are not careful either to keep alive grace in their hearts, or to shew forth the light of good works in their conversation. And in the parable of the talent, *Matth. xxv.* he passeth a most severe sentence upon that

slothful servant, who hid his Lord's talent in a napkin, and buried it in the earth, without making any manner of improvement of it; ver. 30. Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And in the same chapter, where our Saviour represents to us the proceedings of the great day, the charge there drawn up against them, consists of sins of omission, and gross neglects to do the good which they had the ability and opportunity to do, *ver. 42, 43, &c. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.* Not that sins of commission shall then be pass'd by, and left out of the account; it is taken for granted, that they shall be reckon'd for in the first place: but the wisdom of our Saviour chuseth to instance in those sins, which many hope they shall not be call'd to account for, the omission and neglect of their duty, that he might hereby root out of the minds of men effectually that false opinion, which they are so apt to entertain concerning such sins, as if they were of a very light and venial nature.

II. This is evident likewise from reason; because all the actions of reasonable creatures, as such, are under the regulation and government of law, by which, as by a rule, every thing that we do is to be measur'd. And we have all the reason that can be to expect, that he who gave us this law, will look to the observance of it, and take an account of all breaches and transgressions of it, so as to reward those that keep it, and to punish the bold transgressors of it; and if this were not so, the law would want its proper sanction and enforcement, and had been given to no purpose.

And this law of God reacheth all our actions, inward and outward, religious and civil, secret and open, positive and negative, with all the circumstances of commendation or aggravation that belong to them. And as this law is the rule of all human actions now, and by which we ought to live in this world; so it will be the rule by which we and all our actions shall be examined and judged in the next. The judgment of God will be of the same extent with his law.

And thus I have, as briefly as I could, illustrated and confirmed the truth of this proposition, that all the actions which men have done in this life, shall come to account in the next, and they shall be judged for them.

And if so, then certainly no consideration that can be presented to the mind of man, ought in reason to be more powerful to beget in us a strict care and conscience of all our thoughts, words and actions, than this, that after a little while, when a few days or years are over, all that we ever did in this world, shall be strictly examin'd and look'd into, and be approved or condemned by the impartial judgment of God. And therefore, if we have any grain of true wisdom in us, any love to our selves, any sense of our great and everlasting interest, that great day of account should always be before us, and present to our minds, and we should govern every action of our lives with a serious and awful regard to it. And if we be conscious to our selves that *there is any way of wickedness in us*, that we have been grossly culpable in the violation of any known law of God, or in the neglect of any part of our duty, how can we without dread think of coming to so severe an account, and falling under so heavy a sentence, as will then be pronounced upon the workers of iniquity?

Indeed, if we could do any thing now, of which we were to give no account hereafter, and which would not be taken into consideration at the great day, we then might be secure and careless as to such actions: but when nothing we do is exempted from the judgment of God, when we are assured beyond all doubt, that he will one day take cognizance of every thought, word and action; how circumspect should we be, *what manner of persons we are in all holy conversation and godliness!* How nearly does it concern us, *to take heed to our ways, lest at any time we offend: to keep our hearts with all diligence, and to set a watch to the door of our lips!* that we may not think or speak any thing in the sight and hearing of our judge, by which we may incur his censure and condemnation. This is the consideration which the wise man proposes to us, as of all other the most likely to awe men to the careful obedience and observance of God's laws.

Fear

Fear God, and keep his commandments; for God will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Can we be negligent of our lives and actions, when we consider that all the passages of our lives are upon record, and that there is a most exact register kept of them, written in indelible characters with *a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond*? as the expression is, *Jer. xvii. 1. I remember all their wickedness, and their doings are before me*, says God, *Hos. vii. 2. and Amos viii. 7. The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will not forget any of their works.* We sin, and forget that we have sinned; but God chargeth himself with the remembrance of all our evil doings, and they can never slip out of his mind.

Did men seriously believe these things, and were they affected with them as they ought, they could not but have a wonderful effect upon their lives, to make us more watchful over our ways, and to tread every step of our lives more warily. We could not *commit iniquity with so much greediness and pleasure, and rush into sin, as the horse rusheth into battel*, without any fear or consideration, were we verily persuaded, that every evil action that we do in this life, will be matter of charge and accusation in the day of judgment.

Therefore when we are doing any thing, we should ask our selves, will not this also come into judgment? When we are engaged in any wicked design, or vicious course, we should consider, with what face will this act of violence and oppression, of fraud and cozenage, of filthy leudness and brutish intemperance, appear at the great day? How will it look, when *God shall arise to judgment*? When we are careless and remiss, slight and superficial in the service of God, and the duties of his worship, we should remember that God takes notice of all this, and we must give an account to him for the manner, as well as the matter of our actions.

If the actions of our lives were transient, and the consequence of them were over so soon as they are done, and no memorial of them would remain hereafter; if they would die with us, and never rise up in judgment against us; we needed not to take such heed to them: But we do all things for eternity, and every action of this life will have a good or bad influence upon our everlasting state.

More particularly, the consideration of this should have an influence upon us, more especially to these purposes.

1. To make us afraid of lesser sins, as well as greater, because *those* also, as well as *these*, will come into judgment; and we should not esteem any thing little, which God shall think fit to take into consideration, and to bring upon the stage at the great day.

2. The consideration of this should likewise deter us from secret sins. We are apt to think, that if we can but sin in secret, and hide what we do from the eyes of men, we are secure and safe enough: But alas! our great danger is not from men, but God; not now, but hereafter. We are now very solicitous to conceal our wickedness, that we may avoid shame, and escape punishment from men: but God will one day produce all our secret sins, and bring them forth into the light, for all our studious concealment of them now. Now we are afraid of the eye of men, and therefore chuse secrecy, that we may commit our sins privately and unseen. Vain man! the day is at hand, when all thy secret leudness and fraud will be brought upon the publick stage of the world, and be matter of publick infamy to thee, and an everlasting reproach that can never be wiped off; and tho' thou now *coverest thy transgression as Adam, and hidest thine iniquity in thy bosom*; yet the time is coming, when all thy secret wickedness shall be expos'd to the view of angels and men; and then, sinner, what wilt thou do, when thou shalt appear before this all-seeing judge? none of thine arts of concealment will then stand thee in stead. Canst thou hide thy sins from his eye, so that he cannot search them out? or thy self from his wrath? If thou canst not, what matters it to have any secret from others, when all is known to thy judge?

3. This should likewise dispose us to great sincerity in all our words and actions, and make us always to speak as we think, to perform what we promise and profess, and in all things to be what we would seem to be, since there is a day coming when *the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed*, and every mask of

hypocrisy and diffimulation shall be pluck'd off, and our most close and cunning designs shall be brought into the open light. In that great day of revelation, nothing will be matter of comfort and rejoicing to us, but *the testimony of our consciences, that in all simplicity, and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.*

4. This should make us faithfully to improve all the talents and opportunities which God affords to us; because we are but stewards, and must give an account of them. We are apt to covet great wealth, and to aspire after great places and power; but do we consider what it is that we so eagerly desire and pursue? All this will but bring upon us the burden of a greater and heavier account, if we do not improve these talents and advantages to the end for which they were given, to relieve the wants of the poor and miserable, and to serve the great ends of religion and virtue; and if we fail herein, a dreadful account will be exacted of us, and we shall wish that we had been the poorest and meanest, the most ignorant and unlearned persons in the world.

5. This should restrain us from uncharitable censures of others. *Thou art therefore inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest another: for thinkest thou, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?* as the Apostle reasons, Rom. ii. 1,

6. This may help to support us under the unjust censures and reproaches of men. If we be innocent, God will one day bring forth our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noon-day. *With me, saith Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 3. it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord.* It is desirable to approve our selves and our actions to men: but if we cannot, it is a great satisfaction to approve them to our own consciences, and to God who is greater than our hearts, and knows all things.

Lastly, This will teach us not to measure our condition by the good opinion which others have of us; but by the law of God, which will be the standard and measure of our judgment. He will consider every thing exactly, and weigh all the circumstances of our case, and make all the allowances that equity requires. Men can but judge according to appearance: but the judgment of God will be according to truth; therefore we should above all labour to be accepted of him in that day.

S E R M O N CXXVIII.

Of the Sentence to be pass'd at the Day of Judgment.

The fifth
Sermon on
this Text.

2 COR. V. 10.

For we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

I Proceed to the fourth and last proposition contain'd in the text, viz. That at the day of judgment, sentence shall be pass'd upon men according to the nature and quality of their actions done in this world, whether good or evil. The reward of happiness or misery, which men shall be sentenc'd to at that day, shall bear a proportion to the good or evil which they have done in this life.

In the prosecution of this argument, I shall enquire into these two things;

First, What proportion the rewards of the next world shall bear to the actions of men in this life.

Secondly, The grounds and reasons of it. And then make some application of this truth to the consciences of men.

First, What proportion the rewards of the next world shall bear to the actions of men in this life. I mean, whether the rewards of the next life shall only

be proportion'd to the kind and quality of our actions consider'd in general, as good or evil; that is, that good men shall be rewarded with everlasting glory and happiness, and wicked men with eternal punishment and torment: or whether the degrees of these rewards shall likewise bear a proportion to the degrees of the good or evil of our actions, so that a more eminent degree of piety and holiness shall have a proportionable share of glory and happiness; and greater and more heinous sins shall be loaded with greater and heavier punishments.

I. It is clear, and out of all controversy, that men shall be rewarded according to the quality and kind of their actions; good shall be rewarded to the good, and evil to the evil. And this is the constant tenor of the bible. Psal. i. 6. *The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous*; that is, doth approve it, and will reward it: *but the way of the ungodly shall perish*; which is of the same importance with the expression in the verse before, *the wicked shall not stand in the judgment*. Isa. iii. 10, 11. *Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with them, for they shall eat of the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, for it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him*; which if it be meant of the rewards and punishments of this life, is much more constantly and universally true of the other. Mat. xvi. 27. *The son of man shall come in the glory of the father, with his angels with him, and shall reward every man according to his works*. Rev. xxii. 12. *Bekold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according as his work shall be*; that is, whether good or evil. Rom. vi. 23. *The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life*: that is, to those who have their fruit unto holiness, as he had said immediately before. Hither likewise belong those innumerable texts, in which glory and happiness, and eternal life, are promised to those who live *seberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*; and wickedness and disobedience are threaten'd with dreadful and eternal punishment. But I shall only take notice of two or three of the most remarkable of them. Matth. xiii. 41, 42, 43. *The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father*. But this is most fully represented in that particular description, which our Lord himself makes of the process of that day, Matth. xxv. 34. where the sentence that shall be pass'd on the righteous is this, *Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world*. And on the wicked, ver. 41. *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. And, ver. 46. *And these, speaking of the wicked, shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal*. John v. 28, 29. *The hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation*. Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9. speaking of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who, says the Apostle, *shall render to every man according to his works; to them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life: but to them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil*.

II. That the rewards and recompences of the next world shall likewise bear a proportion to the degrees of good or evil which we have done in this life, tho' it hath been controverted, seems also to be sufficiently clear from scripture. And to this purpose, I shall,

1. Produce such texts as will fully prove it.
2. Answer the grounds of the contrary opinion.

1. The scripture doth plainly assert, that the rewards of the next life will bear a proportion not only to the kind and quality of our actions, but to the degree of them; that good men shall receive a reward proportionable to the degree of their holiness and obedience, of their service and sufferings for God; and that the torments of the wicked shall be greater or less, according to the degree and aggravation of their sins.

(1.) As

(.) As for good men: that the reward that shall be bestowed upon them shall bear a proportion to the degree of their service and sufferings for God. This seems to be intimated in those metaphorical expressions used by the prophet *Daniel*, Chap. xii. 3. *They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.* Which is much the same with what *St. Paul* expressly affirms, concerning the different glory of the Saints at the resurrection: *1 Cor. xv. 41. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. Mat. v. 10, 11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you for my name's sake: rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.* Which words, if they do not signify a more glorious reward to those who suffer persecution for Christ, have no emphasis or encouragement in them. For what cause of *exceeding joy and gladness* is it, to be persecuted and suffer for Christ, if a peculiar reward did not belong to those who suffer for him? If there do not, then those who suffer for Christ, are plainly in a worse condition in this world, than other good men who escape these sufferings; and yet are in no better condition than others in the next world: and why then should any man be glad to suffer? *Matth. x. 41, 42. He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward.* Where you see a difference intimated between the reward of a prophet, and a righteous man, namely, that a prophet shall have a greater reward than an ordinary good man. *Matth. xix. 28, 29.* Where our blessed Saviour tells us, that all that denied themselves for Christ, *shall inherit everlasting life;* but for his disciples, who were continually attendants upon him, and sufferers for him, that a more eminent degree of glory should be conferred on them; which is express'd by their *sitting upon twelve thrones, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel.* But most plainly in the parable of the talents, where every man's reward is according to the improvement of his talents. *He that had gained five talents, is made ruler over five cities: and he that had gained ten talents, ruler over ten cities, Luke xix. 15. 1 Cor. xv. 58. Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* But if our reward should not hold a proportion to the degree of our service, it would be in vain to be abundant in the work of the Lord. *2 Cor. iv. 17. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; that is, our affliction contributes to our glory, and adds to the degree of it. 2 Cor. ix. 6. The Apostle useth this as an argument to persuade the Corinthians to be very liberal and bountiful to their distressed brethren, because according to the degree of their charity, would be the degree of their reward. This I say, he that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth plentifully, shall reap plentifully: than which I cannot imagine any thing can be spoken more plainly to this purpose. And the same argument he useth to the Philippians, to stir them up to charity, Phil. iv. 17. Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account: clearly implying, that the more good we do in this world, the more abundant shall be our reward in the next.*

(2.) 'Tis likewise as plain from scripture, that the punishment and torment of wicked men will be abated or increased proportionably to the degree and aggravation of their sins. Upon this account our Saviour threatens those who continue impenitent under the gospel, with more heavy and dreadful punishments, and tells us, that in the day of judgment their condition shall be far worse than theirs of Tyre and Sidon, of Sodom and Gomorrah, *Matth. xi. 20, 21.* And *Matth. xxiv. 51.* he threatens that servant, who, because his Lord delayed his coming, presumed so much upon the patience of God, with a more severe punishment: *The Lord of that servant shall cut him in sunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites;* intimating that the punishment of hypocrites will be very severe, and as it were the standard of the highest punishment. And so likewise, *Luke xii. 47, 48.* our Saviour tells us, that according to the degree of light and knowledge which men sin against, shall be the degree of their torment. *The servant that knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself to do according to it, shall be beaten with many stripes:*

But

But he that knew it not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And in general he tells us, that the punishment of sinners takes its aggravation from the advantages and opportunities which men have neglected. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. So likewise the Apostle to the Hebrews tells us, that God will vindicate the contempt of the gospel more severely than of the law of Moses, Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4. If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? And Ch. x. 28, 29. He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the son of God?

So that it seems very evident from scripture, that the degree of happiness or misery which men shall be sentenc'd to in the next world, shall be correspondent to the degree of good or evil which they have done in this world; and I can hardly imagine any thing more clear. But it seems the schoolmen, and other divines who have been at leisure to tie knots, and to make objections against the plainest truths, have call'd this also into question. And therefore I shall in the

Second Place, briefly examine the grounds of the contrary opinion; which tho' they do but immediately strike at the degrees of glory and happiness, yet by a parity of reason and consequence, they likewise overthrow the degrees of punishment; and they are these *two*:

I. They say, that the merits of Christ, by which eternal life and happiness is purchased for us, are equal to all those who have any interest in them, and are of value sufficient to purchase the highest degree of glory for them; and the meritorious cause being the same, there is no reason to imagine any difference of degrees in the effect.

Answ. The weakness of this objection, how specious soever it may appear, will be evident to any one that considers, that eternal life and happiness doth not accrue to us by way of necessary and natural result from the merit of Christ's obedience and sufferings, but of voluntary compact and agreement, and therefore is only available so far as it pleased God the Father and him that it should be. Now the scripture hath declared, that *Christ is the author of eternal salvation to them that believe and obey him*: but it hath declared likewise, that according to the degrees of our holiness and obedience, shall be the degrees of our happiness; because the happiness which Christ hath purchased for us, is not bestowed upon us but upon certain terms and conditions to be performed on our part, upon the performance whereof, and the degree of that performance, the degrees of our happiness do depend.

II. The other objection is from the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, *Matth. xx.* where it is said, that *they that came in at the last hour received as much as they that came in at the first, and had borne the heat and burden of the day, every one his penny.* For answer to this, it is a known rule among divines, that *Theologia parabolica non est argumentativa*; by which they mean, that we cannot argue in divinity from every circumstance of a parable, but only from the main scope of it. Now this parable seems plainly directed against the envious *Jews*, who murmured because the *Gentiles* were to partake of the blessing of the *Messias*, and that they who were called in the last age of the world, should share in this benefit, as well as the antient people of God; so that by the murmurers, the *Jews* are designed, who were offended that salvation should come to the *Gentiles*. And then the scope of the parable is not, that all good men shall have equal degrees of glory; but that the *Gentiles*, which were call'd long after the *Jews*, should be saved as well as they. I proceed to the

Second thing I propos'd to enquire into, *viz.* the grounds and reasons of this, why the rewards which shall be distributed at the day of judgment, shall bear a proportion to the good or evil which men have done in this life? And,

1. That they shall be correspondent to the nature and quality of our actions, the justice and equity of the divine providence doth plainly require. For justice is to give to every one that which of due belongs to him: now of equity it belongs to them that do well, that it should go well with them; and to the evil, that

that it should be ill with them; that every one should *receive the fruit of his doings*. Not that we can strictly merit any thing at the hand of God. It is goodness to reward an innocent creature, and it is goodness to reward the good actions of those who have been sinners; but justice requires that good and bad men should not fare alike. Thus *Abraham* reasons from the justice of God, *that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the judge of all the world do right?* And considering the promises which the goodness of God hath made freely to good men, for their encouragement in goodness, the performance of these promises is founded in the righteousness and faithfulness of God.

2. That the rewards of the next life should bear a proportion to the degree of the good or evil done by us in this life, is clearly founded in the equity and reasonableness of the thing; it being very much for the encouragement of holiness and goodness, to be assur'd that whatever we do for God now, will be fully consider'd and rewarded hereafter; that he will take notice of the least service that we do for him, and that every degree of grace and holiness shall be crowned with an answerable degree of glory and happiness. And so on the other hand, it tends very much to discountenance sin, and to keep men from running to the height of impiety; to consider that every sin will aggravate their misery, and that every degree of wickedness will add to the weight of their torment; and that tho' they be *children of wrath* already, yet by adding *iniquity to transgression*, they may cause the *wrath of God and his jealousy to smoke against them*, and bring more curses upon themselves, and make themselves *ten times more the children of wrath*.

And indeed in the nature of the thing, it cannot be otherwise; but that the better and more holy any man is, the more capable he should be of happiness, and the more disposed for the enjoyment of God; and the more wicked any man is, the more he should exasperate his own conscience, and awaken those furies which rage in his breast. *He treasures up more wrath against the day of wrath*, and piles up more fuel for everlasting burnings. The torments of hell are in Scripture compared to fire; now the more fuel and greater store of combustible matter is cast into it, the more fierce and raging it must be.

I have done with the explication, and shall now apply what hath been deliver'd:

I. If sentence shall be pass'd at the great day according to the good or bad actions of men, this shews us what should be the great care of every man in this life; to attend to the nature and quality of our actions, and to observe that difference between them in our practice now, which our judge will certainly make in the sentence which he will pass upon them at the great day. And yet so blind and mistaken is the greatest part of the world, that they make this the least part of their care and business. Men are generally very solicitous to be rich and great, and to be in a healthful and prosperous condition, and do with all possible care seek to avoid sickness, and poverty, and meanness: but how few are concerned to be virtuous and good, and to avoid wickedness and vice! And yet these moral differences of men at the day of judgment will only be taken into consideration: other things will not *profit us in the day of wrath*. God in that day will not proceed with men according to their outward quality and condition in this life, their eternal estate shall not then be decided according to their wealth or poverty, their height and meanness in this world: it will not then be enquired what office a man bore, what titles of honour, what manors or lordships he was owner of; but how he hath behaved himself in those circumstances, what use he hath made of his wealth and power, what good or evil he hath done, whether he hath glorified God, and served the great ends of his creation; whether he hath obeyed or disobeyed the truth; whether he hath lived in *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, or *soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*: in a word, whether we have been righteous or wicked. This will be the great enquiry at that day; and these qualities, according as they are found with us, will determine our condition for ever.

II. The consideration of this, may comfort good men under the promiscuous dispensations of God's providence in this world. Now *all things generally happen alike*, and *there is the same event to the righteous and to the wicked*: but things

things will not be always thus. Have but a little patience, and the justice of God's providence, which is now under a cloud, will clear up; the day is coming, which will make a wide and vast difference between good and bad men, *between those that serve God, and those that serve him not; those that swear, and those that fear an oath; between the leud and the chaste, the sober and debauch'd, the meek of the earth and the murderers; between the proud and the humble, the just and the oppressors; between those that persecute, and those who are persecuted for righteousness.*

Now the difference is frequently on the wrong side; good men suffer and are afflicted, the wicked flourish and are prosperous: but *go into the sanctuary of God, and there thou shalt see their end.* Let us but look a little before us, beyond the things which are seen and are but temporal, unto the things which are not seen and are eternal, and we shall see all things strait; that *the end of the wicked, who flourish'd in this world, is to be destroyed for ever; and that the righteous, who were so distress'd and afflicted in this world, shall enter into rest and joy: When the days of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, these shall be comforted, and the other tormented.*

III. If the reward of the next life shall bear a proportion to the degrees of good or evil, which we have done in this world, then on the one hand here is matter of great comfort and encouragement to us in the ways of holiness and obedience. This is a mighty argument to good men *to grow in grace, and to press forward toward perfection, to be steadfast and unmoveable, and abundant in the work of the Lord, because they know that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord;* but that according to the degree of our service and obedience, of our virtue and goodness, shall be the degree of our glory and happiness. We serve a good master, who will consider every thing that we do for him; *who is not unrighteous, to forget our work and labour of love,* and will not let the least service pass unrewarded. Let us not then content our selves with any low degree of goodness; but be continually aspiring after the highest perfection we are capable of. Since we have such a prize in our view, *let us run with patience, and with all our might, the race which is set before us.* For by the same reason that any man desires happiness, he cannot but desire the highest degrees of it that are attainable; and will consequently endeavour to make himself capable of the greatest degree of glory: and tho' no degree of holiness can merit everlasting life and happiness, yet greater degrees of holiness will certainly be rewarded with a larger portion of happiness. God is not bound antecedently to his promise, to give so great a reward to any man for his works; yet he hath promised to reward every man according to them.

So that there is no reason why a good man, when he is once come to this, that by the grace and assistance of God, he can refrain from gross sins, and resist the temptations to them, and perform the great duties of religion, why he should with *Esau*, sit down and say, *I have enough, I have* so much as will carry me to heaven, and I desire no more. 'Tis a sad presage of apostacy, to stand still in religion. He that once stops, the next thing is to look back. This is the remedy which *St. Peter* prescribes against apostacy, *2 Pet. iii. 18. Take heed, lest ye fall from your own steadfastness;* and then it follows, *but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* The best remedy against apostacy, is growth in goodness. It is a rule in policy, that an ambitious man should never stay at any step of preferment, till he come at the top, because it is some security to be in motion. Our ascent to heaven is steep and narrow, and we are safest when we do not stand still: temptation cannot so well take its aim at us.

Let us therefore press after the highest degree of virtue and holiness, and labour to be as good as we can in this world, that in the next our happiness may be the greater; that when the day of recompence shall come, we may receive an ample reward, and *God the righteous judge* may set a bright and glorious crown upon our heads.

We ought likewise to consider, that if any man can be content only to be saved, and desire no more but just to get to heaven, that such a degree of holiness and virtue, as will save a man that can attain no more, will perhaps not save that

man who lazily rests in the lowest degree, and desires no more. To be *least in the kingdom of God*, is next to being shut out of it. It is not to be expected that God should bestow heaven and happiness upon those who are so indifferent about it, as to desire heaven for no other reason, but because they would not go to hell. Men must not think to drive so near and hard a bargain, in so desirable and advantageous a purchase.

And then, on the other hand, it is matter of great terror to great sinners. *The wages of every sin is death*, eternal death; and every degree of hell and damnation is dreadful: but there are sins more heinous in themselves, and some that are attended with heavier aggravations in some persons; these do inflame hell, and heat that furnace *seven times hotter*. There are some moderate sinners in comparison; these shall have a moderate doom, and a cooler hell; but there are others who are extravagant and enormous sinners, that *drink up iniquity, as the ox drinks up water*; that *let themselves loose to commit all wickedness with greediness*; such as sin above the common rate of men, with full consent and upon deliberation, with great design and contrivance, in despite of the clearest convictions, of the best counsels and reproofs; these make haste to ruin and take hell by violence. Now such *mighty transgressors shall be mightily tormented*; they shall not be punished at the common rate of sinners, their consciences will breed more and sharper stings, and wilder furies to torment them, and they shall sink into a deeper misery.

More particularly this concerns us christians, who continue impenitent, and live in our sins, notwithstanding the clear revelation of the gospel, and *the wrath of God revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*; notwithstanding *life and immortality so clearly brought to light by the gospel*. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* What condemnation will be heavy enough for those, who wilfully refuse to be saved? *This is the condemnation*, says our Saviour, *that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light*. All the sins which we now commit, are infinitely aggravated above the sins of thousands in the world, who never enjoyed that light, and those advantages and opportunities which we have done. *The ignorance of these God winked at, but now he expects, he commands all men every where to repent*; because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness. What stripes do we deserve, who have known our Master's will, but have not prepared ourselves to do according to it? All that light and knowledge which we have, all those counsels and instructions which we have read and heard out of God's word, will inflame our account, and heighten our condemnation, and the very means of our salvation will be the saddest aggravation of our ruin. What our Saviour said of the impenitent and unbelieving *Jews*, holds as well concerning impenitent christians; that *it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for them*. But, beloved, I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation. Let us but remember, and seriously consider, that *we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether good or evil*; and this will certainly have a mighty awe and influence upon our lives, and all the actions of them. Now the God of peace, &c.

S E R M O N CXXIX.

The uncertainty of the Day of Judgment, consider'd and improv'd.

M A R K xiii. 32, 33.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.

THESE words are spoken by our Saviour of the day of judgment, for though in this chapter, as likewise in the 24th of St. *Matthew*, and the 21st of St. *Luke*, which are parallel to it, our Saviour discourseth very particularly and largely concerning the eminent appearance of his power and justice in the destruction of *Jerusalem*, which may perhaps sometimes in scripture be called *his coming*; yet it is plain likewise, that he discourseth there concerning his coming to judgment at the end of the world. For we find in the 24th of St. *Matthew*, that after our Saviour had foretold his disciples of the utter ruin of *Jerusalem*, they came afterwards to him, to enquire more particularly about it; *ver. 3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* Where there are two several questions, to which our Saviour returns a distinct answer. The *first*, when those things he had been speaking of before should be? that is, the things which related to the destruction of *Jerusalem*, for of that only he had been speaking of before. The other question was, *concerning the sign of his coming, and of the end of the world.*

The reason of their joining these two questions together, seems to be this, (as is very probable from many texts of the New Testament) *viz.* that the Apostles did think (and our Saviour permitted them for a long time to remain under this mistake) that the end of the world, and the general judgment, would be presently after the destruction of *Jerusalem*.

Now to this second question of theirs, concerning the end of the world, and our Saviour's coming to judgment, he gives an answer in the latter part of that chapter, *ver. 29. But immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; and then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven.* Not that the general judgment of the world was immediately to follow the destruction of *Jerusalem*; for there were many other things to intervene, as is manifest from St. *Luke*, Ch. xxi. 24. *That the Jews should be led captive into all nations, and Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled.* And tho' these things be express'd in a few words, yet they comprehend a long tract of time; for the captivity of the *Jews* hath continued for above 1600 years, and is not yet at an end. And then after the accomplishment of these things it follows, that *there shall be signs in the sun and the moon, and then they shall see the son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.* And then he tells them in conclusion, that *these things should begin to come to pass*, that is, some of them should happen, *before the end of that generation*; and so they did, for the destruction of *Jerusalem* was about forty years after. But when the end of all should be, that is, when the day of judgment would happen, he could not tell them the precise time, *ver. 36. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but the Father only*; and it is added in St. *Mark*, *neither the son.*

Now by that *day and hour*, is meant that famous and terrible time of the general judgment of the world, which St. *Peter* calls by way of eminency, *the day of the Lord*, 2 Pet. iii. 10. *The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night*;

night; that is, it will surprize men suddenly and unexpectedly, because no man can tell when it will be; it will steal upon the world, as a thief does into a house by night. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.*

Having thus cleared all difficulties concerning the general meaning of the text, that it is to be understood of the day of judgment, and not, as some learned men have thought, of the destruction of *Jerusalem*; I shall now consider the words more particularly, and they contain in them these two things:

First, The uncertainty of the day of judgment, as to us, and all other creatures. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, neither the son, but the Father.*

Secondly, That the consideration of the uncertainty of the time, should make us very careful to be always prepared for it. *Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.* I shall speak as briefly as I can to both these.

First, Our Saviour here declares the uncertainty of the time, as to us, and all creatures, when the general judgment shall be. And to express this the more emphatically, he tells us,

1. That God only knows it. *Of that day and hour, οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, εἰ μὴ ὁ Πατήρ, none knows, but the Father.* For tho' we translate it, *no man*, yet in the Greek it is more general, *none knows but the Father*, that is, *God only*. For the word *Father* is several times in the *New Testament* not used personally, in way of distinction from *the son*, and *the holy ghost*; but signifies *the deity*, the Father being *fons & principium deitatis*, the fountain and principle of the deity.

Of that day and hour; the word ὥρα is not here to be taken strictly for the measure of time, commonly call'd *an hour*; this were to make our Saviour's expression very flat, after he had denied that *the day* is known, to deny that they know *the hour*; for if they do not know *the day*, much less the *hour*. Now in these kind of speeches, the expression ought to rise, and that which is most emphatical ought to be said in the last place; so that it should rather have been, *they know not the hour, no, nor the day*; but ὥρα here does undoubtedly signify the appointed season or time; and so the four seasons of the year are by the Greeks call'd ὥραι; and in this sense the word is most certainly used by the Evangelist St. *John*, Ch. vii. 30. *But no man laid hands upon him, speaking of Christ, because his hour was not yet come*, that is, the time appointed for his suffering; and that which in the text is called *hour*, is in the next verse called καιρός, which signifies a particular season, or appointed time. *Ye know not when the time is*, that is, the time which God hath particularly designed and appointed for this great work of judging the world.

2. He excludes from the knowledge of it, those who were most likely to know it, if God had not absolutely reserved it to himself. *Of that day and hour knows none, no, not the angels, neither the son.*

(1.) *Not the angels, which are in heaven*; tho' they be creatures of so perfect a knowledge, tho' they be *the Ministers of God*, and do continually attend upon him, and *behold his face*, and understand much more of the works of God, and his providence in regard to the affairs of the world, than we that live here below in so much error and ignorance, that *dwell in houses of clay, whose foundations are in the dust*: yet the particular time, when God will judge the world, he hath reserved as a secret to himself, and not communicated it so much as to the angels, who are designed to wait upon the great judge of the world, and to make up his train in that solemnity. So our Saviour tells us, *Matth. xxv. 31.* that *the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.* And so likewise the Apostle, *2 Thess. i. 7.* that *the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels.*

But this is not only hid from *the angels*, but, which is yet more, from *the son himself*. *Of that day and hour knows none, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son.* This seems strange indeed, that *the son of God*, who came from *the bosom of his Father*, and therefore is more likely than any to know his secrets, that *he whom God had ordained to be the judge of the world*, into whose hands he had committed that great trust and authority, should not be acquainted

ed with the time of this judgment: nay, that *he, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in whom the divinity does substantially reside*, should not know this time; this seems incredible, but that he himself hath told us so. It was indeed a common saying among the *Jews*, that the time of the end of the world was revealed to none; but yet one would think, *the son* were always excepted. Nay, how can it well be otherwise, if we believe him to be God? and indeed the fathers, in their disputes with the *Arians*, have mightily puzzled themselves about this text.

Some, and those of no small account, have understood these words, as if our Saviour only intended to put off his disciples from a more particular enquiry about this matter; not that he was ignorant of the day of judgment, but that he did not know it, so as to reveal it to them: which is by no means to be admitted, not only because it looks too like the equivocation of the Jesuits, but likewise because the same may be said of *the angels*; since it is no otherwise denied of *the angels*, that they know this time, than it is of *the son*. Others say, that his human nature was not ignorant of the day of judgment, but that it did not know this of it self, but by virtue of its union with the divine nature. But our Saviour absolutely says, that *the son* did not know it. And therefore others more reasonably have distinguish'd between his human nature and divine; and tho' as God he could not be ignorant of any thing, yet his human understanding did not know it. And it is not unreasonable to suppose, that the divine wisdom which dwelt in our Saviour, did communicate it self to his human soul according to his pleasure; and so his human nature might at some times not know some things. And if this be not admitted, how can we understand that passage concerning our Saviour, *Luke ii. 52. that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature*; or as the word *ἡλικία* may more fitly be translated, *in age, and in favour with God and man*? For if the human nature of Christ did necessarily know all things by virtue of its union with the divinity, he could not then, as man, be said to *grow in wisdom*.

And this I think may be sufficient for the clearing of this difficulty, concerning the son's not knowing the particular time which God had appointed for judging the world: And if *he* did not know it, it is surely no reflection upon his disciples, if they were ignorant of it, or mistaken about it. Their infallibility was only in things that were revealed to them, but cannot be imagin'd to extend to things not revealed. And thus I have done with the *first* thing, namely, the uncertainty of the time of the general judgment, as to all but God only. *Of that day and hour knoweth none, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but the Father.* I proceed now to the

Second thing, which I mainly intended, *viz.* That the consideration of the uncertainty of the time should make us very careful to be always prepared for it. *Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.* In which words we have,

First, A general caution; *Take ye heed.* Look to it, that ye be not surprized and overtaken by that time. The time being so uncertain, they were always in danger.

Secondly, More particular directions how they should demean themselves in this case. And our Saviour directs to *two* things, vigilancy and prayer; *Watch and pray.*

Thirdly, There is a reason added to enforce this care and diligence, from the uncertainty of the time as to us: *For ye know not when the time is.*

From whence I shall observe by the way, the great goodness of God to us, and his singular care of us. That as he is gracious and merciful to us, in giving us the knowledge of those things which are necessary and useful for us to know; so no less in keeping us ignorant of other things, which are not only not necessary for us to know, but which it would be very much to our harm and prejudice, to have the knowledge of them communicated to us. God hath acquainted us with whatever is necessary to direct and excite us to our duty; but he hath purposely concealed from us those things, which might tend to make us slothful and careless, negligent and remiss in it. He hath not acquainted us with the secrets of his decrees and providence; but hath reserved these in his own power;

power; because it would be really to our disadvantage to have the knowledge of them. If we knew all events before-hand, and how and when all things would happen, we should be too much concern'd about some things, and too little about others; and therefore God hath, in great wisdom and goodness, afforded us the knowledge of those things which are most proper and useful for us, whereby we may be instructed in our duty, and encouraged and stirred up to it. *Job xxviii. 28. Unto man he saith, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil, is understanding.* This is the knowledge which is fit for us, and which no man is destitute of, but by his own fault, and gross neglect of himself.

So that God is very good to us, both in revealing some things to us, and in hiding other things from us; particularly those things which we are speaking of, concerning the time of the end of the world, and the judgment of the great day. Which did men certainly know to be so far off, as it really was in our Saviour's time, and may perhaps now be, it would very much abate the force and awe of it upon the minds of men; for then men would think themselves safe, till death should remove them out of the world. But when, for any thing we know, the general judgment of the world may overtake us the next moment; this consideration gives a great deal of weight to all the rest, and is apt to strike a particular terror into men. What man would not be afraid to offend, if he did not know but that the next moment he should be brought to his trial, before a severe and impartial judge? So that for this reason, God hath in great kindness to us concealed this matter from us, and like a wise and good father, instead of gratifying our curiosity, hath consulted our real benefit and advantage.

Besides this, that it is always useful to the world to be kept in awe by the continual danger and terror of an approaching judgment, there seems to have been a more particular reason why our Saviour would have the Disciples and first Christians ignorant of this thing; for which reason he discoursed so to them concerning it, as that they might rather apprehend, that the end of all things was at hand, and might probably happen in their time. And thus it seems his Disciples understood his speech concerning St. *John*, as if *he should not die till our Lord came to judgment.* And the Apostles, in several of their exhortations, seem to urge Christians from this very consideration, of the nearness of the general judgment. So St. *Paul*, *Phil. iv. 5. Let your moderation be known to all men; the Lord is at hand.* And the author to the *Hebrews*, *Ch. x. 25. encourageth Christians to constancy in their profession upon the same account, Not forsaking the assembling your selves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, because the day approacheth.* So likewise St. *James*, *Chap. v. 9. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth at the door.* And St. *Peter* tells us, that several impious men scoffed at them upon this account, as if the Apostles had been deceivers in this matter, and therefore said, *Where is the promise of his coming?* as it were upbraiding them, for putting men in a vain expectation of it.

And it was no inconvenience at all, that the Apostles and first Christians had this apprehension of the nearness of that time; for no consideration could be more forcible to keep them stedfast in their profession, and to fortify them against sufferings, than a persuasion of the approach of that day, wherein those who suffered for Christ should be so gloriously rewarded; and those who for fear of suffering fell off from him, should be so terribly punish'd. And nothing could be more proper and powerful, to wean their affections from the love of this world, and to make them willing to part with any thing in it, than to apprehend that there would shortly be an end of it, and then all the enjoyments of it would signify nothing. So that their ignorance in this matter was, by the providence of God, admirably fitted for the animating and encouraging of Christians to a great zeal and constancy in the profession of their faith, and in the propagating of it, as thinking they had but a little while to do this great work in.

And it will be in all ages to the end of the world, a good argument to men to vigilancy and constant preparation; because if they be remiss and careless, the great judge of the world may come in a day that they think not of, and at an hour

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when they are not aware. But to return to the particulars I propounded to speak to from the words.

First, Here is a general caution, *Take ye heed*; look heedfully to it, that ye be not surprized and overtaken by that time: for being uncertain when it will happen, ye are always in danger. But because this general caution is only premised by our Saviour, to make way for the more particular directions, therefore I shall not insist upon this, but in the *Second* place proceed to them. And they are these two, *watch and pray*.

I. Vigilancy, which is a large duty, and comprehends under it the whole care of a christian life; all that watchfulness and preparation which we ought to use, that we be not surprized by that terrible day; that we be not found in such a condition, as slothful and negligent servants use to be in, when their Lord comes suddenly upon them, and finds all things in confusion and disorder: And to this our Saviour alludes several times in his exhortations to watchfulness: Luke xii. 35, 36. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye your selves like unto men that wait for their Lord. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he comes shall find watching. And ver. 40. Be ye therefore ready also; for the son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.* So that this watchfulness implies a continual care of our lives and actions, that we be always in such a posture as we would be willing the great judge of the world should take us in, doing those things which we should not be ashamed to own, if he should come suddenly upon us, and summon us before his tribunal, and avoiding those things, which would be matter of shame and confusion to us at his appearance. Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36. where our Saviour giveth this caution, he instanceth in some particular sins, which are more directly contrary to this vigilance: as intemperance, and an inordinate love and care about earthly things. *Take heed to your selves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares: for as a snare shall it come on all that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man.*

It would be a large work to descend to all particulars, whereby we should express our care and vigilance. I shall mention but a few, but such as will comprehend most others under them.

1. We should resolve without delay, to put our selves into that state and condition, in which we may not be afraid judgment should find us. It is to be feared, that a great part of mankind are in that loose and negligent posture, in the time of their health and prosperity, in which if the great judge of the world should surprize them, and bring them to a speedy trial, it would go ill with them; their case would be sad and deplorable beyond all imagination, infinitely sadder than of a malefactor standing before an earthly judge, guilty of great and notorious crimes, and continually expecting the sentence of death to be pass'd upon him. Such is the condition of all impenitent sinners, who have lived careless and dissolute lives, without any serious consideration of their future state, or preparation for it; who have in the general course of their lives neglected God and Religion, and a great many necessary and essential parts of their duty, and have indulged themselves, either in a continual course of impiety and wickedness, or of sensual pleasures and vanity. What shall become of those whom the judge of the world shall find in this condition, either actually wicked, or wretchedly secure?

Nay, those who do in some measure and degree mind Religion, how few of them live under the powers of the world to come, have their loins girded about, and their lamps burning; and are habitually so prepared, as if they were in a continual expectation of the coming of their Lord? So that in the secure and negligent posture that most men live, even the better sort of men, if judgment should overtake them, how few could be saved? For this cause *God is long-suffering to men, because he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* And if he should not by his merciful providence awaken many men to consideration and care of themselves, and by some great affliction, or long sickness, put men upon serious thoughts, and give them the space
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and opportunity to recollect themselves, to make up their accounts, and so make their peace with God, and to put themselves into a better posture for another world, than they usually are in the time of their health and prosperity; it is very much to be feared, that the greatest part of those who are tolerably good, would be destroyed in their security.

But this patience of God will not always last, but *the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night*, and will surprize the careless world all at once, and give them no time *to trim up their lamps, and to get oil*, if they be not provided already; but in an instant the door will be shut against them, and they shall never enter into the kingdom of God. This day hath not yet happen'd; but it will certainly come, and, as our Saviour says, *will come as a snare upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth*. And *blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he comes shall find ready*.

So that our first care must be, to get out of this dangerous state of sin and security, *to break off our sins by repentance*, that we may be capable of the mercy of God, and at peace with him, before he comes to execute judgment upon the world: for till this be done, we are every moment in danger; and if death or judgment should overtake us in this impenitent state, we are lost beyond recovery.

2. After this great work of repentance is over, we should be very careful how we contract any new guilt, by returning to our former sins, or by the gross neglect of any part of our duty. A true and sincere repentance will put us into a safe condition: but then we must take heed, that we do not repent of our repentance, and bring our selves into danger again, by starting aside from those good resolutions, which we had so solemnly taken up. For every deliberate and presumptuous sin that we are guilty of after our repentance, does endanger our state, and shake the foundations of our peace: but if we relapse into our former evil course, or after our repentance we allow our selves in the habitual practice of any known sin, either our repentance was insincere before, or if it were true for the time, we are fallen from it, and all that we have done signifies nothing, and we have the whole work to begin again. And if the judgment of God should overtake us, before we have renewed our repentance, and reformed our lives, we should be found in the number of *the ungodly, who cannot stand in judgment*. So that, as it concerns us to make haste out of an impenitent state, so no less to order our conversation afterwards with great vigilancy and care: lest by relapsing into our former sins, and being surprized in them by the judgment of God, we fall into condemnation.

3. Let us neglect no opportunity of doing good, but always be employing our selves, either in acts of religion and piety towards God, or of righteousness and charity towards men, or in such acts as are subordinate to religion; I mean the works of a lawful calling, in which, if we demean our selves with diligence and good conscience, we may be said to serve God, and to live in his fear, because we are govern'd by the rules of religion, all the while we are about our worldly business, and providing for the necessities of this life in an honest and industrious way.

More particularly we should strictly charge our selves, according to our estate and opportunities, to be very much in the works of mercy and charity; remembering that our Saviour hath represented this as a special matter of enquiry at the judgment of the great day, how we have acquitted and discharged our selves in duties of this kind, and that nothing does more immediately qualify us for the mercy of God, when we shall come to stand before his judgment-seat, than to have shewn mercy to our brethren: as on the other hand, the scripture hath terribly threatned, that *he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy*. By these, and all other acts of a good life, we shall be in a constant readiness and preparation for the coming of our Lord. And, Oh, what a happiness and comfort will it be to us, to be found by him thus employed! *Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing*. I proceed,

4. We should often review our lives, and call our selves to a strict account of our actions, that *judging our selves, we may not be judged, and condemned, by the Lord*. This frequent examination of our selves, will give us to understand our

errors and miscarriages; which, if we seriously consider, must needs prompt us to repentance, and engage us in purposes and resolutions of amendment. And the practice of this is certainly the best way to keep our accounts clear, and to prevent that horrible confusion which we shall be in, if judgment should surprize us unawares, when we have the guilt of great and manifold sins unrepented of, lying upon our consciences, like a heavy weight, ready to sink us into eternal perdition. Besides, that this strict and frequent examination of our actions, will be an excellent means to make us more careful for the future to avoid those faults and miscarriages which we have observed in our selves before. We should be ashamed to fall into those errors again, for which we have so lately and severely censured and condemned our selves.

5. Another part of our preparation for the coming of our Lord, is, an humble trust and confidence in the virtue of his death and passion, as the only meritorious cause of the remission of our sins, and the reward of eternal life. Though we be regenerated and renewed by the Holy Ghost, and by the assistance of God's grace enabled to perform works of righteousness, and, as is said of *Zachary and Elizabeth, to live in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*; that is, in the general course of our lives, to yield a sincere obedience to the laws of God: yet because *in many things we offend*, and our best righteousness is very imperfect, and falls extremely short of that exact and strict duty, which the law of God requires; and if it were perfect, our obedience for the future could make no reparation to the justice of God for past sins and transgressions; therefore we cannot hope for our own righteousness to be justified and accepted with God, and upon the merit of it to have our sins pardon'd, much less to be rewarded with eternal life. God indeed of his infinite mercy is pleased, upon our repentance, to pardon our sins past, and upon our sincere obedience to give us eternal life; and without these qualifications we shall never be made partakers of these blessings; except we repent, our sins shall not be forgiven us, and *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. But then it is not for the merit of our repentance and righteousness, that these blessings are conferr'd upon us; but for the meritorious obedience and sufferings of our blessed Saviour: that most acceptable sacrifice of himself, which he offer'd to God in our stead, and in our behalf, hath purchased and procured these benefits for us; and *we are accepted in his beloved son, and justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*; and therefore *not for any works of righteousness which we have done, but of his mercy he saves us*. And here we are to fix our hopes of justification and salvation, viz. upon that perfect propitiation and satisfaction, which Christ by the sacrifice of himself once offer'd hath made for the sins of the whole world. For the alone merit of this sacrifice, God is graciously pleased to forgive us all our sins, upon our true repentance, and to reward our sincere, tho' very imperfect obedience, with eternal life. So that *through faith in the blood of Christ*, not by confidence in our selves and our own righteousness, *we obtain remission of sins, and eternal life*. And it is not only in it self great arrogance, but great ingratitude to our blessed Redeemer, *who gave himself for us*, to ascribe that to the merit of our own righteousness, or the merits of the saints, which nothing in heaven or earth, but *the precious blood of Christ, who was a lamb without spot or blemish*, could have purchased for us. And it is argument and encouragement enough to holiness and obedience of life, that without it we cannot see God; and by it we are qualified for that happiness which Christ hath purchased for us, and, as the Apostle expresseth it, are *made meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*.

6. And lastly, to awaken and maintain this vigilancy and care, we should often represent to our minds the judgment of the great day, which will certainly come, though we know not the time of it. And if any consideration in the world will make men watchful and diligent, certainly this will, that the judgment of God continually hangs over them, and may seize upon them at any time; nay, for aught we know, the judgment of God may now be *standing at the door*, and be ready to rush in upon us, whilst we are so negligent and secure. For this day, whenever it shall be, will come suddenly, and surprize the careless world, when they least think of it, and look for it. So our Lord himself

hath foretold, that *as a snare it shall come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth*: that is, the greatest part of mankind shall be taken unprepared, when they are unprovided for it; nay, when they are generally lull'd asleep in a stupid security and infidelity; when the world is grown atheistical, and do hardly believe any such things as a future judgment. So our Saviour seems to intimate, *Luke xviii. 8. When the son of man cometh, shall he find faith upon earth?* And if this be a mark and token of the general judgment, we have too much cause to apprehend that it is drawing on apace: for never was there any age since the general flood, that we know of, when *iniquity did so abound*, and the infidelity of mankind was so full, so great, and so general; when profaneness and atheism, the open contempt of God and religion, was so raging and violent; and when, as our Lord says, there was so little *faith to be found on the earth*; whether by *faith* we understand the belief of the principles of religion, or the fidelity of men one towards another. For was there ever any age, wherein false accusation, perjury and subornation were more *rife* and impudent? Wherein the reverence of an oath was so lost, and the sacred obligation of it in so little regard among men. So that if the great judge of the world should delay his coming, human society seems ready to disband and dissolve of itself, for want of mutual trust and confidence among men to hold it together.

And this want of faith, in both senses, we owe in a great measure to popery; which by its artificial ways of falshood and perjury (which when they have to deal with hereticks, they have upon solemn occasions declared lawful) hath not only weakened, but even destroy'd the credit of mankind with one another, as we find of late by sad experience. And as for infidelity in religion, they have not only given great occasion to it, by the monstrous absurdities they have brought into religion; and by overstraining the faith of men in some parts of it, have brought them to a disbelief of the whole; as is at this day too visible in many of the most knowing persons of their communion, both in *France* and *Italy*: but besides this, they have in their writings, to gain men to a dependence upon, and submission to the infallibility of their church, undermined the foundations of religion, and industriously endeavour'd to bring men to scepticism and infidelity; hoping that when they have made men of no religion, they will be fit for theirs, which in too many respects is next to none; and in some, worse.

But whether the judgment of the great day be near at hand, or farther off, God alone knows; this is certain, that God hath in great mercy delayed it for a long time, because *he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*. And it is no less certain, that it may come at any time, and will come when men least expect it; when the world is in great security, and very little apprehensive of the nearness and danger of it; which is reason and argument enough to continual care and vigilancy: for it may come the next hour, the next moment, for any thing we know to the contrary: and whenever it comes, if we be not prepared, it will be too late to begin that work; if *our lamps be gone out*, and we *want oil*, we cannot provide our selves in such a hurry; we shall be full of fear and amazement, but we shall *find no place for repentance*, and a deliberate preparation for our great trial. As the great judge of the world then finds us, so will he deal with us; such as our state and condition then is, such will be our sentence and doom to all eternity. And is not this argument enough to us to be always upon our guard, always watchful and always ready? because the *son of man may come at an hour when we think not*; and if we be not then prepared, it will be too late to set about it; the opportunity of doing it, and we our selves are lost for ever.

This is the *first* direction our Saviour gives us, continual vigilancy and watchfulness over our selves in general.

The *second* direction is more particular, and that is prayer; *Take ye heed, watch and pray*. And the practice of this duty of prayer will be of great advantage to us upon these *two* accounts.

1. As it tends to awaken and excite our care and diligence in the business of religion.

2. As it is, if sincerely performed, effectual to engage the divine blessing and assistance to second our care and endeavours, and to secure them from miscarriage.

1. It is very apt to awaken and excite our care and diligence in the business of religion. For whenever we heartily beg of God to assist us by his grace, to any thing that is good, we mind our selves of our own duty: and both reason and scripture will tell us, that we pray to God in vain for his help, if we will do nothing our selves; that it is gross hypocrisy, and an impudent mocking of God, to implore his grace and assistance, if we be not resolved to put forth our own endeavours. Prayer indeed supposeth that we stand in need of the divine help; but it implies likewise a resolution on our part, to do what we can our selves; otherwise we *ask in vain*, and have no reason to hope that God will hear our prayers, and grant our requests, tho' never so earnestly and importunately put up to him.

2. If we use our sincere endeavours for the effecting of what we pray for, prayer is the most effectual means to engage the divine blessing and assistance to second our endeavours, and to secure them from miscarriage. And without the aid of God's grace, and his blessing upon our endeavours, they will all be ineffectual, and signify nothing; we shall not be able so much as *to watch one hour*. If God be not with us, *the watchman waketh but in vain*: for *the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*. It is necessary therefore, that we continually implore the divine grace, and that we do not rely upon our own strength, and the fickleness and uncertainty of our own resolutions; according to the wise advice of Solomon, Prov. iii. 5, 6. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths*. Therefore as ever we hope to persevere and continue in a good course, and to order our lives so, as to be in preparation for judgment, let us every day, by continual and fervent prayer, apply our selves to the fountain of grace and mercy, for his aid and help, to make us vigilant over our selves, and all the actions of our lives; to enable us to *a patient continuance in well-doing, to keep us from every evil work, and to preserve us to his heavenly kingdom*.

And to this purpose, we have all the encouragement which the assurance of the divine goodness, and the security of his never-failing promise can give us. It is but asking, and receiving. So St. James tells us, speaking of this heavenly wisdom to direct us in our christian course, so as we may be *perfect and entire, wanting nothing*. Jam. i. 5. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him*. I proceed to the

Third and last part of the text, which is the reason which our Saviour here adds to enforce our care and diligence in a matter of so great concernment, viz. the uncertainty, as to us, of the particular time when this day of judgment will be: ye know not when the time is. Therefore we should always be in expectation of it, always in a readiness and preparation for it. The certainty of the thing, and that *God hath appointed and determined a time, in which he will judge the world in righteousness*, tho' we were sure this day were far off, ought, in all reason, to make us very watchful over our selves, and very careful of all our actions, very strict and conscientious in the discharge and performance of every part of our duty. If there were no more but this, that we must one day be call'd to a strict account for all the actions of our lives, and receive the just recompence of them, and according to the nature and quality of them be sentenc'd to eternal happiness, or everlasting misery; this alone were a mighty argument. So St. Peter reasons, 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11, 12. *But the day of the Lord will come, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Seeing then all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God? that is, making speedy preparation for it*. The very expectation of this terrible day of the Lord, at how great a distance soever, should make us diligent, that whenever it shall be, *we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless*.

But it adds a great deal of awe and force to this argument, to consider, that for aught we know to the contrary, this judgment may surprize us at any time; that this very night we may be awakened by the sound of that mighty trumpet, which shall pierce the ears of all the world, and summon the living and the dead to judgment. And God, who is the lover of souls, and desirous to save us any ways, by hope and by fear, by his mercies and by his corrections, by our knowledge and by our ignorance, hath purposely concealed from us the time of his coming to judgment, to the end we may always be prepared, and that we might continually stand in awe of it; and for fear our Lord should come upon us unawares, might always be in a posture to receive him.

And whatever the secure part of mankind may think, who *put far from them the evil day*, how careless and confident soever they may be, it would for all that be a terrible thing to them, all on the sudden, *to see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with his mighty angels*; to hear the great trumpet sound, summoning the dead to arise and come to judgment; to see the whole world in a combustion, and the whole frame of nature ready to dissolve and fall in pieces; *the sun darken'd, and the moon turned into blood, and all the powers of heaven shaken, the earth and all the works that are therein, flaming about us*; to see the dead starting out of their graves, some with great joy, others in a mighty amazement and fright, according to their several expectations of a happy or fearful doom. What a surprize would it be to drowsy and careless sinners, to be thus suddenly and unexpectedly overtaken? How will the profane infidel like to find himself so terribly confuted by his own eyes, and forced to believe that which will make him tremble? It will then be too late for men to think to make their peace with God, and to prepare for judgment. And if there were any time for it, the horror and amazement that sinners will then be in, will hinder them from doing any thing. Thus the scripture represents the fearful case of impenitent sinners, who are thus surprized, as not knowing what to do with themselves, nor whither to fly for safety, as ready to betake themselves any whither for shelter and refuge, as *calling upon the mountains and rocks to fall upon them, and bide them from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb*; hereby signifying to us, that sinners shall be in such a consternation, and so deep a despair of the mercy of God towards them, that instead of addressing themselves to him, they shall turn their supplications to *the mountains and rocks*, as being more exorable than he.

But this possibly may not be our case; this dreadful day may not come in our days; and yet it is madness to run a venture in a matter of such moment: but if it should not, I must tell you, that the case of a dying sinner is not much different, who hath neglected God and religion in his life-time, and would never think of betaking himself to him, or making any submission, till his justice be ready to cut him off. And how secure and careless soever sinners may be now, no man knows how soon he may be reduced to the very last opportunity of making his peace with God, and may be brought into those sad and miserable straits, that no man that is in his wits would be in for all the world; that he may have nothing left that can give him the least hope of being saved from eternal perdition, but a sudden and confused, and in all probability, an ineffectual repentance; nothing but this one plank to trust to, which it is ten thousand to one whether it ever bring him to shore.

Therefore be wise, sinner, in time, and seize upon the present opportunities of life, and improve them with all thy might, with all possible care and diligence, lest judgment find thee unprepared; or in case God in mercy to the world, should delay it yet longer, lest death seize upon thee careless and unprovided. And when that is once in view, it is but very little that can be done by way of preparation: for *as there is no counsel nor wisdom, no work nor device in the grave, whither we must go*; so there is very little when we are come near to it; and therefore *blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find watching*.

S E R M O N CXXX.

The Certainty, and the Blessedness of the Resurrection of true Christians.

I THESS. IV. 14.

For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

THE words which I have read are an argument of the blessed resurrection of good men to eternal life, grounded upon the resurrection of Christ. In the verse before the Apostle comforts christians, concerning their brethren that were already departed in the faith of Christ, that there was no reason why they should so immoderately grieve for them. *But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as others that have no hope:* that is, as the heathens do, who mourn for their dead friends in so grievous a manner, as if they were utterly extinguish'd by death, and they had no imagination of any life beyond this. And thus we find the Apostle elsewhere describing the state of the heathen world; *Eph. ii. 12. that they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope.*

But christians should not mourn for their deceased friends, as the heathen were wont to do, who had no hope of a better life; because christians profess to believe that Christ is risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven: *for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.*

There are two things to be explained in the words before we come to consider the matter of them:

First, What is meant by those that sleep in Jesus.

Secondly, What by God's bringing them with him.

First, What is meant by those that sleep in Jesus. Sleep is a metaphor used for death by all sorts of writers profane and sacred; and by the ancient christians, the place of burial was called κοιμητήριον, that is, a sleeping-place. This metaphor is sometimes applied to the death of the wicked, but most frequently used of the death of the righteous, because to them it is truly a rest. And so the prophet speaking of the death of the righteous, calls it, *Isa. lviii. 2. They shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds.*

And the death of the righteous is very fitly call'd a sleep, both as it is a rest from labour and pain: *blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; for they rest from their labour, Rev. xiv. 13.* and likewise because sleep is not final, but in order to waking again. The death of the righteous is not an eternal sleep of the body, but that shall be awakened in the morning of the resurrection.

But why is the death of good men call'd a sleeping in Jesus? διὰ Ἰησοῦ, for Jesus sake; which may seem to have some particular relation to those who died Martyrs for Christ; as some likewise understand that text, *Rev. xiv. 13. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,* that is, that suffer for his cause; *for they rest from their labours,* that is, their sufferings are then at an end. But we shall best understand the meaning of this phrase, by comparing it with those others which seem to be equivalent to it, as *1 Cor. xv. 18. They also that are fallen asleep in Christ; Ver. 23. They that are Christ's at his coming,* that is, they that belong to him, that died in the faith of Christ. So likewise is this, *1 Thess. iv. 16. The dead in Christ shall rise first;* that is, the christians that are dead before the coming of Christ, shall first be raised, before those that are alive shall be changed. *Heb. xi. 13.*

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All these died in the faith, that is, in firm belief of God's promise of a better life. So that *to sleep in Christ, to be Christ's, to die in Christ, to die in the faith*, do all seem to signify the same thing, viz. to die in the state of true christians. For so we understand the like expressions of *being in Christ*, Rom. viii. 1. *He that is in Christ*, that is, every sincere christian; and of *abiding in Christ*, John xv. 4. *He that abideth in me*. So *to die in Christ*, is to die a true christian, in the faith and obedience of the gospel.

And it is observable, that in the phrase and stile of the New Testament, *we are said to die all in, and with Christ; to be in him, and to live in him, and to walk in him*, by our sanctification and obedience; *to die with him*, by the mortification of our lusts; *to rise with him*, by our renovation to a new life; *to ascend with him into heaven*, and to have *our life hid with Christ in God*, by our heavenly affections and hopes; and by death, *to sleep in him*.

But before I pass over this phrase of *sleeping in Jesus*, there is one difficulty more about the sleep of the soul, which seems to be countenanced from this text, *Those that sleep in Jesus, shall God bring with him*; as if the Apostle spake here of the souls of good men which had been asleep, and Christ should bring with him to be united to their bodies, which should be raised; as likewise from the whole tenor of the Apostle's discourse about the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. where the Apostle says nothing of the living of the soul before the body be raised; as if the soul separated from the body were in a state of insensibility, till the resurrection. But the true answer to this is, that neither our Saviour in his discourse of the resurrection, nor St. Paul in the 15th chapter to the *Corinthians*, nor here in this text, do keep closely to the proving of the resurrection of the body; but of a blessed immortality after this life, against the *Sadduces*, who said, *there was no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit*. But sometimes they prove that there is a life after death; and sometimes that at the resurrection, the soul shall be joined to a spiritual and heavenly body, and that the whole man shall enjoy perfect bliss and happiness.

But this opinion, or rather dream, concerning the sleep of the soul from the time of death, that is, from the time of the separation of the soul from the body till the general resurrection, may be effectually confuted these *two* ways:

1. By taking away the ground of it: and,

2. By producing several texts of scripture, which are utterly inconsistent with it. And this I shall the rather do, because some men have taken a great deal of pains to establish and prove this opinion; tho' I confess I do not well understand to what end, because there is as little comfort as truth in it.

1. By taking away the only ground that I know of, of this opinion; and that is, from the frequent metaphor and resemblance in scripture of death to sleep. And indeed those which are dead, are frequently in scripture said *to sleep*, or *to be fallen asleep*: But then (which falls out very cross to this opinion) this metaphor of sleep is no where in scripture applied to the soul, but to the body resting in the grave, in order to its being awaken'd and raised out of this sleep at the resurrection. And thus it is frequently used, with express reference to the body; Dan. xii. 2. *Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake*; and surely *sleeping in the dust of the earth*, can only be applied to the body. And more expressly yet, Matth. xxvii. 52. *And the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept, arose*. Acts xiii. 36. *David after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but he whom God raised again, saw no corruption*. Now that of David which fell asleep, and was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption, was certainly his body; and that of our Saviour which was raised again, and saw no corruption, was likewise his body, according to that prediction concerning him, *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, in Hades*, by which is plainly meant the state and place of souls separated from the body; nor suffer thy holy one to see corruption, that is, the body of our blessed Lord to rot in the grave. 1 Cor. xv. 20. *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept*; that is the resurrection of his body out of the grave, is an earnest and assurance that our bodies also shall be raised. And ver. 51. *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed*; where the Apostle undoubtedly speaks both of the death and change of these

these corruptible bodies. And so likewise the text is to be understood of the resurrection of the bodies of the saints, which shall be raised up by the sound of the great trumpet, and reunited to their souls, that they may in person accompany Christ at his coming. So that it is *the body*, which is every where said in scripture to *sleep*, and not *the soul*; and if so, then the only foundation of this opinion is taken away.

2. I shall shew, that this opinion of the sleep of the soul is utterly inconsistent with several passages of scripture, which plainly suppose the contrary; as *Luke xvi. 22, 23.* where, in the parable of the rich man and *Lazarus*, the different states of good and bad men, immediately after their departure out of this life, are described; but they are so described, that it is evident that the souls of neither of them are asleep. It is said of *Lazarus*, that *he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom*, and that there *he was comforted*; and of the rich man, that *he was in hell*, and there *tormented in flames*. This was not like to be a state of sleep and insensibility, and the rich man cries out of his torment; and that we may be sure he was awake, he is said *to lift up his eyes*. And there is all the reason that can be to conclude, that *Lazarus* was every whit as sensible of the comfort and happiness that he was in, as the rich man was of his torment. *Luke xxiii. 43.* where our Saviour says to the penitent thief, *this day shalt thou be with me in paradise*: but not surely to sleep there till the resurrection. Tho' some have endeavour'd to avoid the force of this text, by referring *this day* to what goes before, and not to what follows after; as if our Saviour had said; *I say unto thee this day*; and not, *this day thou shalt be with me in paradise*: which is a foolish evasion, because, *I say unto thee*, necessarily implies the present time, and there is no need to add, *this day*; besides that there is no such phrase any where used, as *I say unto thee this day*. *Phil. i. 23.* *I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.* But if *to be with Christ*, be to be in a state of sleep and insensibility, how is that so much *better* than to be in the body, serving God and his church? *2 Cor. v. 6.* *Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we sojourn in the body, we are absent from the Lord; we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.* But certainly, *to be present with the Lord*, which the Apostle here affirms that good men are, so soon as they depart out of the body, must needs signify a state of happiness; which *sleep* is not, but only of insensibility. Besides that the Apostle's argument would be very flat, and but a cold encouragement to christians against the fears of death, that as soon as we are dead, we shall fall asleep and become insensible. But the Apostle useth it as an argument, why we should be willing to die as soon as God pleaseth, and the sooner the better; because so soon as ever we quit these bodies, *we shall be present with the Lord*, that is, shall be admitted to the blissful sight and enjoyment of him; and that whilst we *abide in the body*, we are detained from our happiness. But if our Souls sleep as well as our bodies, till the general resurrection, it is all one whether we continue in the body or not, as to any happiness we shall enjoy in the mean time; which is directly contrary to the main scope of the Apostle's argument.

Secondly, what is here meant by *God's bringing with him those that sleep in Jesus*? In general these words signify a blessed resurrection, as may be seen by the opposition; *If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him.* Where to *Christ's death* is opposed our *sleeping in Jesus*; and to his *resurrection*, *God's bringing us with him*; that is, his raising us out of the grave to accompany him at his coming. But the meaning of this expression will best appear, by considering what follows after the text: *For this we say by the word of the Lord*, that is by special revelation, *that we that are alive, and remain at the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them that are asleep*; that is, we shall not be taken up into heaven, before the saints who are already dead shall be raised: but thus it shall be, *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of an Archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.* The plain meaning of all which is, that first the dead in Christ shall be raised, and taken up to him in the air, to accompany him at his coming, and thus *he shall bring them with him*; and then those which are alive at his coming, shall be

be changed and taken up likewise, *to meet the Lord in the air*. And the same account the same Apostle gives us, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. *Behold, says he, I shew you a mystery, (which is the same he had said before in the former text, this we say unto you by the word of the Lord) I shew you a mystery, (so he calls that which was not reveal'd to all by our Saviour, but to himself particularly) we shall not all sleep, but we shall be chang'd; that is, all shall not die, but at the coming of Christ many shall be found alive and changed; but these shall have no advantage of those who were dead in Christ before: for in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead shall be raised incorruptible; that is, with spiritual bodies which will be no more liable to corruption; and we, that is, those that remain then alive, shall also be changed.* From all which it appears, that the meaning of this expression, *those that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him*, is this, that the Lord Jesus shall come *in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of his Father*, and by the sound of the trump of God shall raise the dead in Christ. And our Saviour tells us more particularly, that this shall be done by the ministry of angels, Matth. xxiv. 30, 31. *When the son of man comes with power and great glory, that the angels shall with the great sound of the trumpet gather the elect from the four winds; and when they are thus gathered, God shall bring them with him.*

And here I cannot but observe, that the title of God is given to our Saviour, who is to be judge of the world. *Them that sleep in Jesus, shall God bring with him.* And elsewhere our Apostle speaking of this glorious appearance and coming of Christ to judgment, calls him *the great God*; Tit. ii. 13. *Looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Which cannot be understood of the appearance of two persons, viz. God the father, and his son Jesus Christ our Saviour; for then the article would have been added to distinguish them, and it would not have been *καὶ σωτῆρ ἡμῶν*, but *καὶ τὸ σωτῆρ ἡμῶν*, as if he had said, *the appearance of the great God and of Jesus Christ our Saviour*; whenas, according to the propriety of the Greek, the article being wanting, it ought to be render'd thus, *looking for the appearing of Jesus Christ the great God and our Saviour*. This is very much confirm'd, in that the same Apostle here in the text, speaking of Christ's coming to judgment, calls him God, *then shall God bring with him.*

The words thus explain'd, give us this *observation*; that it is a firm principle of the christian religion, that those who die in the faith of Christ, that is, in the state of true christianity, shall have a blessed resurrection. *If we believe, saith the Apostle, that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also that sleep in him, shall God bring with him.* The Apostle to the Hebrews reckons the resurrection of the dead, among the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Heb. vi. 2.

In speaking to this *observation*, I shall do these three things:

First, I shall shew what it is to die in the faith of Christ, or in the state of a true christian, which is here called, *sleeping in Jesus*.

Secondly, I shall shew how the death and resurrection of Christ are an argument and proof of our resurrection from the dead. And,

Thirdly, Wherein the blessedness of the resurrection of the just doth consist.

First, What it is to die in the faith of Christ, or in the state of a true christian, which is here called, *sleeping in Jesus*. And this imports one of these two things; either,

1. That we die in such a belief of the doctrine of Christ, as hath been accompanied with a holy obedience of life, to the commands and precepts of the gospel; that our profession of the christian religion hath evidenced it self in the virtues of a good life, in the constant course and tenour of an holy and unblameable conversation. This assurance the christian religion gives us, that *if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end shall be everlasting life*.

Or else, 2. That we exercise such a sincere and unfeigned repentance before death for the errors and miscarriages of our lives, as produceth a firm purpose and resolution of amending our lives, if God should be pleased to prolong and continue them. For only such a belief and profession of the christian religion, as produceth one of these effects, doth put us into a state of grace, and give us hope of a blessed resurrection to eternal life.

The

The *first* of these effects is much to be preferr'd, viz. the general course and tenour of a holy life; the latter being infinitely more hazardous, by reason of the deceitfulness of our hearts, and the infinite uncertainty of a death-bed repentance.

Secondly, I shall shew how the death and resurrection of Christ are an argument and proof of our resurrection from the dead. *If we believe, &c.*

I shall shew by and by, how the resurrection of Christ is an argument and proof of our resurrection. But why is his death here mention'd, as part of the argument? *If we believe that Christ died.* The reason is obvious; because the truth of the miracle of his resurrection depends upon the reality of his death; for if Christ was not really dead, then he could not rise from the dead, and the pretence of his resurrection was a delusion and imposture: but if he was really dead, and rose again from the dead, then have we a firm ground for the belief of a future resurrection. Now this Christians do believe, that Christ was really dead, and rose again from the dead, and that upon very good grounds. We need not doubt but that the malice of the *Jews* took care to kill him; and the story makes it evident, because blood and water came out of his side, which is a certain proof that his heart was pierced; and it could not be a *deliquium*, or a fainting fit, because after his blood was exhausted, he could not naturally return to life again. But we need not contend much about this, since the Heathens who are unconcern'd confess this. *Tacitus*, in the 15th book of his *Annals*, tells us, that *Jesus was put to death by crucifixion under Pontius Pilate.* And *Josephus*, who was a *Jew* both by his birth and religion, and lived presently after our Saviour's time, in the 18th book of his *Jewish Antiquities* tells us, that *Christ was crucified, and that he appeared to his followers the third day, risen from the dead.*

Now this cannot in reason be said to be done only in appearance, and to be a mere illusion of mens senses, as some antient hereticks pretended; because that which may be an evasion in any case, is to be admitted in none. For what greater evidence is possible of any one's rising from the dead, than the circumstances of our Saviour's resurrection? That there was a great earthquake, and that the stone was rolled away from the grave, and the grave-clothes found there, and his body gone; and that after this he appear'd and convers'd so often with so many, to whom he was well known when alive, and entertain'd long discourses with them, and did eat and drink with them, and permit them to handle his body, and to put their fingers into the wound of his side; and all this exactly agreeing with his own prediction. So that if we believe the providence of God, we cannot think it to be so little vigilant, as that men after their utmost care, must necessarily be deluded in a matter of so great consequence.

Now I shall shew, that the death and resurrection of Christ is a very good argument of our resurrection. 1 Cor. xv. 20. *Christ is said to be risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.* Not that he was the first that was raised from the dead; for *Elijah* and *Elisha* raised some, and so did our Saviour himself in his life-time: but the Apostle here alludes to the *first fruits* among the *Jews*, which were a pledge and an earnest of a future harvest. In like manner the resurrection of Christ is call'd the *first fruits of them that slept*, because it is an earnest of that general harvest, which should be at the end of the world, when *the angels, the reapers, shall come to gather the elect from the four winds.* But the resurrection of others before Christ was no earnest of this, because they *were raised*, but Christ is said to *rise from the dead by his own power.* And in this sense he is truly said by St. *John*, Rev. i. 5. to be *the first begotten from the dead.* And this secures our resurrection to eternal life; because he who hath promised to raise us up, did *raise himself from the dead,*

And that Christ intended to lay great stress upon this argument, appears in that he foretold it so often, as the great sign that he would give to the *Jews* to convince their infidelity. John ii. 18, 19. *The Jews said unto him, what sign shewest thou unto us, Jesus answered, destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days; speaking of the temple of his body.* And Matth. xii. 39. 40. he tells the *Jews*, that he would give them *no other sign but the sign of the prophet Jonah*, that

as he was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so should the son of man be three days in the bowels of the earth.

Now the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and, which was consequent upon it, his ascension into heaven, does first give us satisfaction in general of another life after this, and an immortality after death; and then of his power to raise us from the dead, because *he raised himself*; as the Apostle argues, *Rom. viii. 11. If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit which dwelleth in you.* And then, lastly, it secures us of his truth and fidelity, that he will perform what he hath promised us. He could not have promised any thing more improbable than this, that he himself would rise again the third day; and therefore since he kept his word in this, there is no reason to distrust him in any thing else that he hath promised. By his own resurrection from the dead, he wrought such a miracle, as is the most proper to confirm us in the belief of our resurrection to eternal life: *Rev. i. 18. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen, Amen.* What is that? We have it explain'd, *Rev. iii. 14.* where he says of himself, *I am the Amen, the faithful and true witness.* This very thing that Christ was dead, and lives again, makes him the *Amen, the true and faithful witness.* I proceed to the

Third and last thing, viz. Wherein the blessedness of the resurrection of the just shall consist; namely, in these two things:

I. In the mighty change which shall be made in these vile and mortal bodies of ours, and the glorious qualities they shall then be invested withal. And,

II. In the consequent happiness of the whole man, of the soul and body united and purified.

I. In the mighty change which shall then be made in these vile and mortal bodies of ours, and the glorious qualities which they shall then be invested withal. But wherein this glory shall consist, because it is matter of pure revelation, we must wholly rely upon scripture for the particular account and explication of it. And there are three texts of scripture, wherein this glorious change which shall be made in our bodies at the resurrection, is more particularly mentioned and described. The

First is *Luke xx. 35, 36.* *But they who shall be counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* This our Saviour speaks, because that which occasioned this discourse concerning the resurrection, was a question moved by the *Sadducees* concerning a woman that had seven husbands in her life-time; upon which they captiously ask'd our Saviour, *Whose wife of the seven this Woman should be at the resurrection?* To which our Saviour answers, by taking away the foundation of it, telling them, that in the other world *they neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* And the reason of this is very obvious; because the reason why men marry now is, because they are mortal, and therefore to preserve and propagate the kind, which would otherwise fail, marriage was instituted: but in the other world this reason will cease; because then men shall be immortal, and die no more. And therefore our Saviour, after he had said, that *at the resurrection of the dead, men neither marry, nor are given in marriage,* he immediately adds, as the reason of it, *neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels,* that is, they shall be like them in the immortal duration of their beings; *and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.* Good men are now *the children of God,* because they resemble him in the holy disposition of their minds: but then they shall be like him in the participation of his happiness, so far as finite and created beings are capable; the whole man, the body as well as the soul, shall be partakers of immortality. And this is a glorious change, for a frail and mortal body, liable to pains, and diseases, and death, to become immortal, and freed from all those troublesome accidents, to which they are now liable. The

Second text to this purpose is, *Phil. iii. 20.* *But our conversation is in heaven,* says St. Paul, speaking of true and sincere Christians; *But our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself.*

himself. And this is a great change indeed, whether we consider what our bodies now are; *vile* and corruptible; or the pattern according to which they shall be changed: *They shall be fashioned like to the glorious body of our blessed Saviour*; that wherein he now sits in the highest heavens, at the right hand of the throne of God. And what glory can we desire beyond that, with which God thought fit to reward his own son, after all his obedience and sufferings? And this will be the more credible, if we consider the relation which the scripture so often mentions between Christ and all true Christians. He is the *head*, and they are the *members*; now there must be a conformity between these. A *glorious head* and *vile members*, would make a monstrous and irregular body; nay, the head could not be glorious, if the members were not so too. Or, *lastly*, if we consider the mighty power which will be put forth for the effecting this change. The omnipotency of the son of God will exert it self in this work. So the Apostle here tells us, that *the Lord Jesus Christ will change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself*. Omnipotency will display its whole force in bringing about this change. And what cannot that Almighty power do, which is able to conquer and subdue all things?

The *Third* text, and that wherein this change is most fully and particularly described, is 1 Cor. xv. 35. *But some will say, how are the dead raised? And with what bodies do they come!* This was the common objection which the infidels made against this article of the resurrection: either men shall rise with the same bodies which they had in this life; or they shall not. If with the same bodies which they had in this life, to what purpose will that be? Since in the other world men shall not eat or drink, or propagate their kind, and consequently have no use of such a body as ours now is: but if it be not the same body, how then are mens bodies raised? To this question, the Apostle gives a clear answer; That the bodies of men which shall be raised, shall in some respect be the same, and in other respects not the same; the matter and substance of the body may still be the same, and yet may undergo a mighty change, be fashioned after another manner, and be endowed with quite other qualities than it had before. And this he illustrates by *two* instances.

1. By the difference between the corn which is sown, and that which grows up. And,

2. By the difference of several sorts of bodies, which are all made of the same kind of matter.

1. From the difference between the corn which is sown, and that which is grown up, ver. 36, 37, 38. *Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die*, that is unless it be first buried in the earth, and rot, and be corrupted there; and *that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain, as of wheat, or some other kind*. But bare grain, that is, a naked grain, without either stalk, or blade, or ear: *But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him*; that is, the author of nature makes it spring up in a blade which grows up into a stalk, which bears an ear which contains many grains of corn; and *to every seed his own body*, that is a body of the same kind with the seed that was sown.

2. The other instance is from the difference of several sorts of bodies, which are all made of the same kind of matter, put into different forms, some more perfect and glorious, and others less: ver. 39, 40, 41. *All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one flesh of men, another of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds*; and yet all these are fashioned out of the same kind of matter. *There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another*; and the celestial bodies are of a different lustre and glory; *for there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; and one star differeth from another star in glory*.

And then he applies these instances to the resurrection, ver. 42. *So also is it in the resurrection of the dead*. This matter which was vile before, when it was buried in the earth, puts on another form, and by the power of God is raised up a different thing, and far more glorious than when it was put into the earth: ver. 42, 43, 44. *It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour,*

it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural (or an animal) body, it is raised a spiritual body. I shall briefly explain these several expressions, which represent to us the difference between our bodies, as they now are, and as they shall be at the resurrection.

It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. Our bodies, as they are now, are unequally tempered, and in a perpetual flux and change, continually tending to corruption, being made of such contrary principles and qualities, as by their perpetual confliction do conspire the ruin and dissolution of it. But when they are raised again, they shall be so tempered and refined, as to be free from all these destructive qualities, which threaten a change and dissolution; *they shall be raised incorruptible*, so as not to be liable to decay and death. The body, though it continues still material and consists of matter, shall then partake of the immortality of the soul to which it is united, and be of equal duration with it. So the Apostle tells us, Ver. 52, 53. *The dead shall be raised incorruptible; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. Our bodies, when they are committed to the earth, are vile offensive carcases, and therefore we hide and bury them out of sight: but they shall be raised beautiful and glorious, as different from what they were before, as the heavenly mansions, in which they are to dwell for ever, are from the dark cell of the grave, out of which they are raised; and they that before were only fit company for dust and worms, shall be admitted into the reviving presence of God, and the blessed society of angels.

It is sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power. Our bodies now fall to the ground through their own frailty, and drop into the grave through the weakness and infirmity of nature to support and bear them up any longer: but though they fall through weakness, they shall at the resurrection be endowed with such a life, and strength and vigour, as to be able, without any change or decay, to abide and continue for ever in the same state.

It is sown a natural body, ψυχικόν, an animal body, an earthly cottage or tabernacle fitted for the soul to lodge in for a little while, but it is raised a spiritual body. And this is the sum of all the rest. Our bodies in this world are gross flesh and blood, liable to be affected with natural and sensual pleasures, and to be afflicted with natural pains and diseases, to be press'd with natural necessities of hunger and thirst, and obnoxious to all those changes and accidents to which natural things are subject: *but it shall be raised a spiritual body*, pure and refined from the dregs of matter; it shall not hunger nor thirst, be diseased or in pain any more. These houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, are continually decaying, and therefore they stand in need of perpetual reparation by food and physick: but *our house which shall be from heaven*, shall be of such lasting and durable matter, as not only time, but even eternity it self shall make no impression upon it, or cause the least decay in it. *They who shall be accounted worthy*, says our Saviour, *to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, cannot die any more; but shall be like the angels, and are the children of God*; that is, in some degree shall partake of the felicity and immortality of God himself, who is *always the same, and his years fail not.* *It is raised a spiritual body.* We shall then be as it were all spirit, and our very bodies shall be then raised and refined, that they shall be no clog, no impediment to the operations of our souls. And surely we cannot but think this a glorious change, when we consider how our bodies do now crush our spirits, and what a melancholy and dead weight they are upon them, and how grievous an incumbrance, and trouble and temptation they are for the most part to us in this mortal state. I proceed now to the

II. Thing, wherein the blessedness of the just at the resurrection shall consist, viz. in the consequent happiness of the whole man, of the soul and body united and purified, the one from sin, the other from frailty and corruption; and both admitted to the blessed sight and enjoyment of the ever-blessed God. But this is an argument too big for our narrow apprehensions of things, whilst we are in this mortal state; a subject too unwieldly for such children, as the wisest of us all are while we are in this world; and whenever we attempt to speak of it, we do but *speak like children, and understand like children, and reason like children* about it. *That which is imperfect, must be done away*; our souls must be raised to

a greater perfection, and our understandings fill'd with a stronger and steadier light, before we can be fit to handle such a subject, according to the worth and dignity of it. We must first have been in heaven, and possess'd of that felicity and glory which is there to be enjoyed, before we can think or talk of it, in any measure as it deserves. In the mean time, whenever we set about it, we shall find our faculties oppress'd with the weight and splendor of so vast and glorious an argument; like St. Paul, who when he was caught up into paradise, saw and heard that, which when he came down into this world again, he was not able to express, and which is not possible for man to utter.

So that, in discoursing of the state of the blessed, we must content our selves with what the scripture hath declared in general concerning it, that it is a state of perfect freedom from all those infirmities and imperfections, those evils and miseries, those sins and temptations to which we are liable in this world; a state of unspeakable and endless joy and happiness in the blessed sight and presence of God, and in the happy society of *an innumerable company of angels*, and of the *spirits of just men made perfect*.

So St. John describes the felicities and glories of that state, as they were represented to him in a vision, Rev. xxi. 2, 3, 4. *And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away; that is, all those evils which we saw and suffer'd in this world, will for ever vanish and disappear. And ver. 23. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And which is the greatest privilege and felicity of all, no sin shall be there; ver. 27. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth; and consequently no misery and curse shall be there: Ch. xxii. 3, 4. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God, and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face.* In which last words, our employment and our happiness are express'd; but what in particular these shall be, and wherein they shall consist, it is impossible for us now to describe; it is sufficient to know in general, that our employment shall be our unspeakable pleasure, and every way suitable to the glory and happiness of that state, and as much above the noblest and most delightful employment of this world, as the perfection of our bodies, and the powers of our souls, shall then be above what they were in this world.

In a word, our happiness shall be such as is worthy of the great king of the world to bestow upon his faithful servants, and infinitely beyond the just reward of their best services; it is *to see God, and to be ever with him, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.*

S E R M O N CXX XI.

Of the Happiness of good Men, in the future State.

I JOHN iii. 2.

The first Sermon on this Text. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

THE great design of this epistle is to persuade men to purity and holiness of life, without which we can lay no claim to the promises and privileges of the gospel. Christians are call'd *the children of God*; and this is a great privilege indeed, a mighty argument of God's love and favour to us, to own us for his children. *Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.* This is the happiness of our present condition: *now we are the sons of God; and if sons, then heirs*; this gives a title to a future inheritance. *And it does not yet appear what we shall be*; the circumstances of our future happiness and glory are not perfectly revealed to us, only thus much in general is discover'd to us, that we shall be very happy, because we shall be admitted to the immediate sight and enjoyment of God; and we cannot see him and enjoy him, unless we be like him; and to be like God, is to be happy. *We know that when he shall appear, ἐὰν φανερωθῇ, that is, when it shall appear. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when it shall appear, that is, when our future happiness shall be revealed to us: it is not yet particularly discover'd to us, but thus much in general we know of it before-hand, that we shall be like God, for we shall see him as he is.* In which words there are these four things worthy of our consideration:

First, The present obscurity of our future state, as to the particular circumstances of that happiness which good men shall enjoy in another world: *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*

Secondly, That thus much we certainly know of it in general, that it shall consist in the sight and enjoyment of God; *We know that when it shall appear, we shall see him as he is.*

Thirdly, Wherein our likeness to God shall consist; *We shall be like him.*

Fourthly, The necessary connexion between our likeness to God, and our sight and enjoyment of him: *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*: that is, because *we shall see him as he is*; therefore it is certain *we shall be like him*; for unless we be like God, we are not capable of seeing and enjoying him.

First, The present obscurity of our future state, as to the particular circumstances of that happiness which good men shall enjoy in another world: *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.* The scripture tells us, that it is a glory yet to be revealed: that there shall be such a state of happiness for good men in another world, tho' it was in a great measure obscure to the world before, both to *Jews and Gentiles*, yet it is now clearly reveal'd to us by *the appearance of Jesus Christ, who hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.* But the particular circumstances of this happiness are still hid from us; and as it is a needless, so it would be a faulty curiosity in us to pry and enquire into them. It is enough that we certainly know there is such a state; the knowledge of this in general is enough to quicken our diligence, and excite our endeavours for the obtaining and securing of it: it is enough to mortify all evil affections in us, and to baffle all temptations to sin, to know that it will rob us of so great a felicity, as God hath promised to us; it is enough to support and comfort us under all the miseries and afflictions of this present time, to be fully assured that after a few days of sorrow

and trouble are over, we shall be unspeakably and eternally happy. A firm persuasion of this, is argument enough to our obedience, and a sufficient support to our faith and patience, and we need enquire no farther. Thus much God hath reveal'd to us for our comfort and encouragement, the rest he hath conceal'd from us; and it would be a bold intrusion into his secrets, to pry and search any farther; and if we should, it would be to no purpose. For in things which depend upon divine revelation, it is impossible for us to know any more, than God is pleased to reveal to us. In matters of pure revelation, we cannot go beyond the word of the Lord: *The things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God*, or he to whom the spirit of God shall reveal them. If one should come from a strange country, never known and discover'd before, and should only tell us in general, that it was a most pleasant and delightful place, and the inhabitants a brave, and generous, and wealthy people, under the government of a wise and great king, ruling by excellent laws; and that the particular delights and advantages of it were not to be imagin'd by any thing he knew in our own country, and should say no more of it: If we gave credit to the person that brought this relation, it would create in us a great admiration of the country described to us, and a mighty concern to see it, and live in it. But it would be a vain curiosity, to reason and conjecture about the particular conveniences of it; because it would be impossible, by any discourse, to arrive at the certain knowledge of any more, than he who only knew it, was pleased to tell us. This is the case as to our heavenly country. Our blessed Saviour, who *came down from heaven, from the bosom of his father*, hath revealed to us a state of happiness and glory in general, that there is such a *kingdom prepared for us*; and when he was leaving the world, he told us, that he was going thither by the way of the grave; and when he was risen again from the dead, and was ascended into heaven, he promised to *come again* at the end of the world, and to raise us out of the grave, and to carry us into those celestial mansions, *where we shall be for ever with the Lord*. And beyond this he hath made no particular discovery to us of the felicity of that place; he hath given us no punctual representation of the glory of it; he hath not declared to us in a special manner, what our work and employment shall be, in what way God will communicate himself to us, nor what kind of conversation we shall have with the blessed angels, and with one another, and how far we shall know, or be known to one another; or whether we shall stand affected in any peculiar manner to those who were our friends and relations, and acquaintance in this World. These and perhaps a thousand things more which may concern the glories of that state, and the happiness and employment of *the spirits of just men made perfect*, our Saviour hath told us nothing of, but only in general; and it is impossible for us with any certainty to make out the rest, any more than children can make a conjecture of the designs and reasonings of a wise man; not only because it would be of no great use to us, but because the imperfection of human nature, and of our faculties in this state of mortality, is not able to bear a full and clear representation of so great a glory.

When our Saviour was transfigur'd upon the mount, and a little image of heaven was shewn to men, the disciples were strangely amazed, and knew not what they said. And St. Paul tells us, that when he was *taken up into the third heaven*, the things which he saw and heard there, *were not to be utter'd*. So that well might the Apostle say here in the text, *It doth not yet appear what we shall be*. Our future state is very obscure to us while we are in this world, as to any distinct and particular knowledge of it.

There are a sort of idle men in the world, I mean the schoolmen, who have been very busy and bold in their inquiries, very peremptory in their determinations of several things relating to it: but after all our search and study, it is impossible for us to advance one step farther in the knowledge of it, than God hath been pleased in his holy world to reveal it to us. And how much God hath reveal'd, I shall in discoursing of the

Second particular consider; namely, That thus much we know of it in general, that it shall consist in the blessed vision of God: *It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when he shall appear, we shall see him as he is*. Thus much all Christians know, because our Saviour hath plainly reveal'd it to them, that the blessed-

ness of the saints should consist in *the vision of God*. Matth. v. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God*. Which the Apostle expresseth with a little variation, Heb. xii. 14. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. Here is a great thing express'd to us in a few words, *We shall see him as he is*: for the better understanding of which, it will be convenient to enquire into these *three* things.

I. What is meant here by *seeing God*.

II. What by *seeing him as he is*.

III. The fitness of this metaphor, to express to us the happiness of our future state.

I. What is meant by *seeing God*. The schoolmen have spun out abundance of fine cobwebs about this, which in their language they call *the beatifick vision of God*, and they generally describe and explain it so as to render it a very dry and sapless thing. They make it to consist in a perpetual gazing upon God, and contemplating the divine essence and perfections, in which, as in a clearer mirror, they suppose men to see and know all other things. But this is a very jejune and insipid notion of happiness, but yet suitable enough to the gust and inclination of those that devised it. And indeed men are naturally apt to form such notions of God and heaven to themselves, as are most agreeable to their own appetites and inclinations. So the heathen world framed to themselves Gods after their own image and likeness, of like passions and inclinations, and lusts with themselves; and such a heaven as pleas'd themselves, and was most suitable to their own gross imaginations of pleasure and happiness; and therefore they described it by pleasant fields, and clear rivers, and shady walks. So likewise *Mahomet* framed such a paradise, as is most agreeable to our sensual appetites and lusts. In like manner the schoolmen, who addicted themselves wholly to contemplation, would have the happiness of heaven to consist in that which they themselves took most delight in. But surely the scripture understands something more by the *sight of God*, than a bare contemplation of him. It is a known rule given by divines for the understanding of scripture; "The words that signify sense and knowledge, are very often in scripture to be so understood, as to comprehend in them those affections and effects, which sense and knowledge are apt to produce in us." So our knowledge of God doth in scripture many times import the sum of all religion, the whole duty of man: *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar*: And God's knowing of us, signifies the whole happiness of man; *The Lord knoweth them that are his*. So tasting and sight are in scripture put for experience and enjoyment, Psal. xxxiv. 8. *Taste and see that the Lord is gracious*. Lament. iii. 1. *I am the man that have seen affliction*, that is, *that have suffer'd it*. 1 Pet. iii. 10. *He that will love life, and see good days, that is, enjoy them*. And so we use the word in common speech. To see a friend, is to enjoy the pleasure of his company, and all the advantages of his conversation. So here, *the sight of God* doth comprehend and take in all the happiness of a future state. As to see the king, includes the court, and all the glorious circumstances of his attendance; so *to see God*, does take in all that glory, and joy, and happiness, which flows from his presence.

I grant indeed, that this expression primarily and immediately denotes our perfect knowledge of God in the other life, in opposition to those obscure and more imperfect discoveries and apprehensions which we have of him in these earthly bodies: for I think we need make no doubt, but that sight is here taken in a spiritual and intellectual sense. We are not to dream that we shall see God with our bodily eyes; for being a pure spirit, he cannot be the object of any corporeal sense. But we shall have such a sight of him, as a pure spirit is capable of; we shall see him with the eyes of our minds and understanding. And in this sense, we do in some degree *see God* in this life, by faith and knowledge; but it is but *darkly*, and as it were *through a glass* that we see him, as the Apostle expresseth it. But when we come to heaven, our understanding shall be raised and cleared to such a degree of strength and perfection, that we shall know God after a far more perfect manner, than we are capable of in this state of mortality. And this perfect knowledge of him, together with the happy effects of it, those affections which it shall raise in us, and that blessed enjoyment of the chief good which we are not able to express, is that which is call'd *the sight of God*.

II. What

II. What is here meant by *seeing God as he is: we shall see him as he is*. Now this doth farther and emphatically express our perfect knowledge and enjoyment of God.

1. Our perfect knowledge of him. Not that we are to imagine, that when we come to heaven, our understanding can, or shall be raised to such a pitch, as to be able perfectly to comprehend the infinite nature and perfections of God: for all created understanding being naturally finite, we cannot imagine that it can be stretched to the comprehension of what is infinite, as the divine nature and perfections are. But our knowledge shall be advanced and raised to such degrees of perfection, as a finite and created understanding is capable of.

And we may very reasonably conceive, (and indeed the scripture leads us to it, without and beyond which, it is not safe to speak of these things) I say, we may reasonably conceive the perfection of this knowledge to consist in these *three* things: in a more *immediate*, and *clear*, and *certain* knowledge of the divine nature and perfections, than we are capable of in this state of mortality.

(1.) We shall then have an *immediate* knowledge of God. In this world we see him by the means and help of his word and works; we see him as he hath manifested and revealed himself to us in the holy scriptures, as he hath represented himself to us in the creatures, as the Apostle tells us, *Rom. i. 20. That his eternal power and godhead are clearly seen by the things that are made*. But thus we do not see God immediately and directly; but by a reflection of his perfections from the works of creation and providence. We see him by faith at a great distance, which the Apostle calls, *seeing him as it were thro' a Glass*, *1 Cor. xiii. 12*. Now faith in scripture is most frequently opposed to sight, which is a more immediate view and nearer discovery of a thing. *2 Cor. v. 7. We walk by faith, and not by sight*. But in heaven we shall have an immediate and direct sight of God, that which the scripture calls, *seeing him face to face*; not at a distance, as we do now by faith; not by reflection, as we do now see him in the creatures; but we shall have an immediate and direct view of him. *Faith shall then cease*, as the Apostle tells us, and be perfected in sight, because of the nearness and evidence of the object.

(2.) We shall not only then have an immediate, but a far *clearer* knowledge of God, than we have now in this life: *1 Cor. xiii. 12. We now see him in a glass darkly, ὡς ἀνίχνυται, in a riddle*, which is an obscure and involved declaration of a thing. We have now but very dark and confused apprehensions, and such as do not only represent him very imperfectly, but many times very falsely to us. While our souls are muffled in these gross bodies, we are compass'd about with clouds, which do in a great measure intercept the sight of him: but the light of glory will scatter all these clouds, *the veil shall then be taken away*. The resurrection will refine our bodies to that purity, that they shall be fit instruments for our souls. We shall have spiritual bodies, as the Apostle tells us, *1 Cor. xv.* so purified from all these dregs which now incumber them, that they shall be fit to be united to a spirit, and to act with it; and then *we shall with open face behold the glory of God*, as the Apostle expresseth it, *2 Cor. iii. 18.* or as it is here in the text, *we shall see him as he is*. We see him now many times *as he is not*; that is, we are liable to false and mistaken conceptions of him: but then *we shall see him as he is*. The clearness of our knowledge will free us from all error and mistake about him. We are now many times at a loss, what conceptions to have of God; we are hard put to it to reconcile one perfection of God with another, and to make them consistent and agree together. We believe his providence; but we are puzzled many times how to make that accord with his goodness and justice: but in heaven we shall see the harmony of all these, and that it was nothing but our ignorance and darkness, which made us imagine any discord and disagreement in them.

(3.) We shall then likewise have a *certain* knowledge of God, free from all doubts concerning him. There may be a certainty in faith; but not that high degree of evidence and assurance which is in sight. 'Tis spoken by way of abating the certainty of faith, when it is called *the evidence of things not seen*; nay, many times the faith of good men is mix'd with a great deal of fear and

doubt of the contrary: but in the state of glory, we shall not be liable to any of these doubtings and jealousies, which do so frequently possess the best of men in this world. Then *we shall know, as also we are known*, as the Apostle expresseth it, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. As God now knows us, so shall we then know him, as to the truth and certainty of our knowledge.

Now such an immediate, and clear, and certain knowledge of God, as hath been described, doth necessarily suppose a very great elevation of our understandings, above what this state of mortality can bear. We cannot now have a clear and immediate sight of God, because the weakness and imperfection of our present state will not admit of it. In this life, our understandings are easily over-borne by the lustre and excellency of an object. Hence it was that God said to *Moses*, when he so earnestly desired to see his face, *thou canst not see my face, and live*, Exod. xxxiii. 20. So transcendent and glorious a sight would quite overwhelm and overcome our faculties; as the light of the sun, if we look stedfastly and directly upon it, will dazzle and blind the strongest eye. The sight of so glorious a being as God is, of so much excellency, and happiness, and perfection, as concenter in him, would fill us with joy and wonder, too great for frail mortality to bear: but in the state of glory, the eye of the soul, that is our understanding faculty, shall be enlarged unto that capacity, and purified to that clearness, and elevated to that strength, as to be able to receive and bear so much of the lustre and glory of the divine nature and perfection, as is consistent with the finiteness of a human understanding, and suitable to the perfection of a glorified soul; and our understandings shall then be raised and advanced to such a strength, that they shall be so far from being oppress'd and burdened with the presence of God, and from sinking under the weight of his glory, that they shall be infinitely ravish'd and delighted with it.

2 *To see God as he is*, does imply our perfect enjoyment of him. We shall not only perfectly know him, but we shall take infinite pleasure in him, in beholding his glory, in praising and admiring his goodness, in doing his will with all imaginable readiness and cheerfulness. I do not pretend to describe to you the particularities of that state, and all the blessed comforts and enjoyments of it; *it doth not yet appear what we shall be*. God hath not told us, and none but he, who is the author and fountain of this happiness, can discover it to us. Let it suffice us, that God hath assured us of it, and hath prepared it for us; and it can be no mean thing, which the infinite wisdom, and goodness, and power of God hath designed for the final reward of those who love him, and of those whom he loves. If we know thus much of it, that it is certain beyond all doubt, and vast beyond all imagination, we have nothing more to wish, but that God would fit us for it, and as soon as he pleaseth, bring us to the enjoyment of it.

III. We will consider the fitness of this metaphor, to express to us the happiness of our future state. And that the scripture doth very much delight to set forth to us the blessedness of heaven, by this metaphor of *seeing*, is evident from the frequent use of it in scripture. Matth. v. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God*. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. *We shall see him face to face*. Heb. xii. 14. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. And here in the text, *we shall see him as he is*. And indeed God is pleased, in scripture, to make sensible descriptions of the happiness and misery of another world, and by way of accommodation to our understandings, and condescension to the weakness and imperfections of this state, to set forth heaven and hell to us by such things as are sensible; and that not only to help our understandings to a more easy conception of things, but likewise to move and rouse our affections, which while we are in the body, and immers'd in sense, are commonly most powerfully wrought upon, by sensible representations of things. And therefore hell is described to us by such things as affect the sense of feeling, because that is capable of the greatest and sharpest pain; and the enjoyments of heaven, by the sense of sight, because that is the noblest of all our senses; and the primary and proper object of it is most delightful, and of the most spiritual nature of any corporeal thing.

I. Sight is the noblest and most excellent of all our senses: and therefore the frame of the eye is the most curious of all other parts of the body, and the dearest to us, and that which we preserve with the greatest tenderness. When the

the Apostle would set forth the mighty affection which the *Galatians* bore to him; he says, *They would have plucked out their very eyes for him.* 'Tis the most comprehensive sense, hath the largest sphere, takes in the most objects, and discerns them at the greatest distance. It can in a moment pass from earth to heaven, and survey innumerable objects. It is the most pure, and spiritual, and quickest in its operations, and approacheth nearest to the nature of a spiritual faculty. Of all our senses, it carries the greatest evidence and certainty along with it, and the reports of it are the most certain and unquestionable. Hence we use to say, that one eye-witness is more than ten ear-witnesses. When *Job* would express to us the most perfect knowledge of God, he does it by *sight*, *Job* xlii. 5. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eyes see thee:* that is, he had a more perfect and clear discovery of God and his perfections, than ever he had before. And to mention but one thing more; it is that sense which is more apt to work upon our affections.

*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,
Quàm quæ sunt oculis commissa fideblius;*

“ The things which we hear reported, are not so apt to move our pity, or anger, or love, as the things which we see with our eyes.” So that in all these respects, of the dignity and excellency, the largeness and comprehensiveness, the spirituality and quickness, the evidence and certainty of this sense, and the power it hath to raise our affections, it is the fittest to represent to us the noblest employment and operation of our souls in the state of glory.

2. The primary and proper object of this sense, is the most delightful and of the most spiritual nature of any corporeal thing, and that is *light*. *The light of the eye rejoiceth the heart*, *Prov.* xv. 30. *Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eye to behold the sun*, *Eccles.* xi. 7. It is the purest and most spiritual of all corporeal things, and therefore God chuseth to represent himself by it: *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

And thus I have done with the *second* thing I propounded to speak to; namely, that thus much in general we certainly know of the happiness of our future state, that it shall consist in *the sight of God*. I should now proceed to the *third* thing, namely, wherein our likeness to God shall consist; But this I shall defer to another opportunity.

S E R M O N CXXXII.

Of the Happiness of good Men, in the future State.

I JOHN III. 2.

*The Second
Sermon on
this Text.*

It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

IN these words, are *four* things worthy of our consideration.

First, The present obscurity of our future state, as to the particular circumstances of that happiness which good men shall enjoy in another world; *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*

Secondly, What we know of it in general; that it shall consist in the perfect knowledge and enjoyment of God; both which are comprehended in that expression. *We shall see him as he is.*

Thirdly, Wherein our likeness and conformity to God shall consist; *This we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.*

VOL. III.

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Fourthly,

Fourthly, The necessary connexion between our likeness and conformity to God, and our sight and enjoyment of him. The *two* first of these I have spoken to. I shall now proceed to the

Third; namely, wherein our likeness and conformity to God shall consist, *We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him*: in these *two* things, in the immortality of our nature, and in the purity of our souls.

I. In the immortality of our nature. In this mortal state, we are not capable of that happiness which consists in the vision of God, that is, in the perfect knowledge, and perpetual enjoyment of him. The imperfection of our state, and the weakness of our faculties, cannot bear the sight of so glorious and resplendent an object, as the divine nature and perfections are: *We cannot see God and live*. The frailty of our mortal condition is unequal to sustain so great a weight of glory; to be sure it is incapable of eternal felicity: nothing but an immortal nature can be happy for ever. And therefore the scripture tells us, that when our bodies shall be raised, the quality and condition of them shall be quite altered, and that our blessed Saviour shall by his almighty power make a mighty change in them, from what they were in this mortal state: *Phil. iii. 20, 21. Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself*. And the Apostle tells us more particularly, wherein this change doth consist, *1 Cor. xv. 42. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body*. These corruptible, and vile, and weak, and gross bodies, which we wear and carry about us for a while, and at last put off, and lay down in the grave, shall by the power of God at the resurrection, be refined and advanced into spiritual and vigorous, glorious and immortal bodies. Our bodies are now but a tabernacle, a temporary and moveable dwelling, that shall shortly be taken down; but at the resurrection, they shall become a fix'd and settled habitation, a house that shall never decay, nor come to ruin. So the Apostle tells us, *2 Cor. v. 1. We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. And when this blessed change shall be made, *Mortality shall be swallowed up of life; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*. And there is a necessity of this, in order to our perfect happiness. For that is not a perfect happiness, which shall expire and have an end; which it must have, if we were still liable to mortality. And therefore the Apostle is peremptory, that there must be such a change, because our bodies, as they are now constituted and framed, are utterly incapable of the happiness of the next life. *Ver. 50. For this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*. Where by *flesh and blood*, the Apostle does not mean, as many have imagined, our sinful and impure nature; but our frail and mortal nature, consisting of such gross materials as flesh and blood are, for the maintenance and support of which, there is continual need of new recruits, and fresh supplies of nourishment by meat and drink. Such a nature as this, which is necessarily mortal, *cannot inherit the kingdom of God*, which is a state of perpetual and endless happiness. And that the Apostle means this by the phrase of *flesh and blood*, is evident beyond all doubt, from the next words, which he adds by way of explication of what he had said, *This, I say, brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption*. That which is liable to death and corruption, is not capable of immortal glory and happiness. And therefore our nature must be made immortal; and immortality makes us like to God, and is an evident testimony and declaration that we are *the sons of God*. *We are now the children of God*, in respect of our title to a future inheritance; but this is hid from the world: but at the resurrection, when we shall bear the image of his immortality, this will be an evident mark of our being *the sons of God*. As our blessed Saviour was *mightily declared to be the son of God, by his resurrection from the dead*; so likewise shall his members be declared to be *the children of God* by that glo-

glorious change that shall be made in them at the resurrection, when *this mortal shall put on immortality*. Then we are *the sons of God* indeed in an eminent manner, when we can die no more.

And therefore it is worth our observation, that the scripture gives us the title of *the children of God*, more especially upon this account, *Luke xx. 35, 36. But they which shall be counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, can die no more, but are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.* And *Rom. viii. 19. the resurrection is call'd, The manifestation of the sons of God.* And *Ver. 21. Our being delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.* And *Ver. 23. it is call'd our adoption or sonship; We our selves groan within our selves, waiting for the adoption, viz. the redemption of our bodies.* This is the *first* thing, wherein our likeness and resemblance to God in our future state of happiness shall consist, the immortality of our nature; without which we could not be capable of the blessed vision of God, and the everlasting enjoyment of him.

II. It shall consist in the purity of our souls. Now purity is a freedom from sin, which is the great stain and defilement of the soul. Before we can be admitted into heaven, we must be quit of all those vicious and corrupt inclinations, of all those inordinate desires and passions, which defile our souls, and render us unlike to God. In this world, every good man does *mortify his earthly and corrupt affections*, and in some measure *bring them into obedience and subjection to the law of God*. But still there are some reliicks of sin, some spots and imperfections in the holiness of the best men. But upon our entrance into the other world, we shall quite *put off the old man with the affections and lusts thereof*; we shall be perfectly *delivered from this body of sin and death*, and together with this mortal nature part with all the remainders of sin and corruption, which cleave to this mortal state. For till *our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved*, we shall never be wholly cleansed from the leprosy of sin. While we are in this world, we must be continually *cleansing our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God*. But we shall never be wholly cleansed, we shall never be perfectly holy in this life: but in the other state, all sin and imperfection shall be done away, and we shall be *presented to God, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*. And perfect holiness is the image of God, and the very nearest resemblance of the divine nature, that creatures are capable of.

But how our souls shall be purified from those remainders of sin and dregs of corruption, which are in the best men, while they are in this world, it is not necessary that we should be able perfectly to explain. It ought to be sufficient to us, that he who hath promised it, is able to do it one way or other; only I am confident, and have great reason to be so, that this purification will not be wrought by the fire of purgatory. For if there be any such thing, as there is not the least spark of divine revelation for it, (and how any body should come to know it otherwise, is not easy to imagine) it is granted to be a material fire; and if it be so, it is no ways fitted, either for the punishment or purgation of impure souls. Indeed if men carried their bodies into purgatory, the fire of it might be a cruel torment and vexation to them: but how a fire should scorch a spirit, is I believe beyond the subtilty of a schoolman to make out; much less is it fitted to purge and take away sin. And if the truth were known, it was never seriously intended for this purpose, to do any good to the dead, but to drain the purses of the living, by deluding them with a vain hope of getting their friends delivered out of that imaginary torment.

But we who take our faith from the word of God, and not from the fictions of men, do believe that the souls of good men do immediately pass out of this world into a state of happiness; and that he who does bestow this happiness upon them, does qualify them for it, before he admits them into it. And if we consider the matter well, we shall find that a man who hath truly repented of his sins, and thro' the mercy of God in Jesus Christ hath obtained of God the pardon and forgiveness of them, and is firmly resolved against sin, and doth truly endeavour to mortify his lusts, and to lead a holy life, and by the grace of God does *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and lives soberly and righteously, and godly in this present*

present world; I say, we shall find that such a man is *not far from the kingdom of God*, but very nearly qualified and disposed for it; and that there hardly wants any thing to make such a man perfectly good, but only to remove out of his way those obstacles and impediments to virtue, and to free him from those circumstances of infirmity and temptation, which do unavoidably encompass us in this world; such as are ignorance, and the instigations of our bodily temper to irregular appetites and passions, that which the Apostle calls, *The law in our members warring against the law of our minds*; the necessities of this life, the temptations of the devil and of bad company, and the like; all which do appertain to this state, and which we shall be quit of so soon as we leave this world, and put off these frail and mortal bodies: and when these are removed, we are free from the bondage of sin, and have nothing to hinder and divert that strong bent and inclination of mind, which is in every good man, to do the will of God. So that our very translation into another state does of it self assert us into this *glorious liberty of the sons of God*. And if besides this any thing more be necessary to cleanse us from sin, and perfect the holiness and purity of our souls, we need not be solicitous about the way and manner of it, but may rest confident, that *he who hath begun a good work in us, will perfect it in the day of Christ*; and that what is wanting in our love to God, or charity to men, in goodness, and meekness, and purity, or any grace or virtue whatsoever, shall then be added to them, that *so an entrance may be administer'd to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. This we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; like him in the immortality of our nature, and in the purity of our souls, which are the very image of God, and the most express character of the divine nature. The

Fourth and last thing remains, which is to shew the necessary connexion which is between our likeness and conformity to God, and our sight and enjoyment of him: We know that we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Which implies, that unless we be like God, we are in no capacity of the blessed sight and enjoyment of him.

I. Likeness to God in the immortality of our nature, is necessary to make us capable of the happiness of the next life; which consists in the blessed and perpetual vision and enjoyment of God. If our natures were mortal, we were incapable of seeing God. What was said of *Moses*, is equally true of all mankind, in this state of mortality. *We cannot see the face of God and live*. Nothing that is frail and dying can endure the splendor of so great a glory; nothing that stands in need of continual reparation, as *flesh and blood* does, can inherit the kingdom of God; nothing but a fixt and immutable nature, which can never decay, is capable of everlasting happiness.

But this part of likeness and conformity to God, tho' it be necessary to make us capable of the felicity of another world, yet it is no part of our duty and care: If we endeavour after the other, which consists in holiness and purity, God will work this in us, and for us, without any concurrence of ours. All that he requires of us, is, that we firmly believe it, and patiently expect it, and fervently pray for it, and aspire after it. And indeed our likeness to God in this respect, depends upon our conformity to him in purity and holiness. For as *by sin death entered into the world, and so death passed upon all men*; so nothing but holiness can restore us to immortality.

The foundation of all our hopes of a blessed immortality, is to be laid in the price of our redemption, as the meritorious cause of it, and in our being *renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness*, as the proper qualification and capacity for it on our parts. We must have our fruit unto holiness, if we look that the end should be everlasting life. And to this purpose it is excellently said in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, *the keeping of God's commandments is the assurance of immortality, and immortality makes us like to God*. And therefore I shall mainly apply myself to the

II^d thing; namely, To shew that our likeness to God in the purity of our souls, is necessary to make us capable of the blessed sight and enjoyment of him in the next life. It is necessary as a condition of the thing; and it is necessary as a qualification in the person.

1. It is necessary, as a condition of the thing to be performed on our part, before we can expect that God should make good the promise of eternal life and happiness to us. The express constitution and appointment of God hath made it necessary, who hath told us, *without holiness no man shall see him; that if we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption; but if we sow to the spirit, that is, if we be sanctified and renewed, we shall of the spirit reap everlasting life.* And if this were a mere arbitrary condition, imposed upon us by the sovereign will of God, without any necessity from the nature of the thing; yet we ought to accept it, as a very easy condition; when he hath only said, as the prophet did to *Naaman, wash and be clean.* Certainly no man can refuse so great a benefit and blessing conferred upon such cheap and tolerable terms. God hath promised us eternal life; a mighty blessing indeed! for the obtaining of which, no condition that is possible can be thought hard and unreasonable. And what does he require of us for the obtaining of it? But that we *cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God;* that is, that we do with all care and diligence abstain from sin, and endeavour to live a holy life; to conform ourselves to the will of God, and to be obedient to his laws. He does not require perfect holiness of us in this life, but a sincere endeavour after it, and he hath promised to assist our endeavour; and if we go as far as we can, he will perfect what is wanting. So that there is nothing in all this but what is very possible for every man to do, by the assistance of that grace which he hath promised to afford us; and if it be possible, we cannot answer our neglect of it, when all our hopes of happiness depend upon it. But this is not all, there is yet,

2. A farther necessity of it, inwardly to qualify and dispose us for the fight and enjoyment of God. We cannot possibly love God, nor take delight in him, unless we be like him in the temper and disposition of our minds. If we would know what will make us happy, we must look upon the great pattern of happiness, and that is God himself; who, as he is the most powerful, and wise, and every way perfect, so is he the happiest being in the world. So that if we would be happy, we must be like God. We cannot be so perfect as he is, and therefore we cannot be so happy; but if we would be as happy as creatures are capable of being, we must endeavour to be as like God as it is possible for creatures to be.

We must resemble him as near as we can, in those perfections wherein he is imitable by us. And these are, as I may call them, the moral perfections of his nature, which the scripture usually comprehends under the name of *holiness*; his goodness, and patience, and mercy, and justice, and truth, and faithfulness; and these, as they are the great glory, so the chief felicity of the divine nature.

Goodness is a perfection of it self, tho' it were without any great degree of knowledge or power. A poor man, and one that is ignorant in comparison of others, may yet be a very good man. But power and knowledge separated from goodness, are not perfections, but may be applied to the worst and most mischievous purposes; as we see in the devil, who hath both these qualities in a high degree.

If we could suppose an omnipotent and all-knowing being, that were destitute of goodness, he would not only be troublesome to others, but uneasy to himself. Without goodness there can be no happiness. So that those perfections which contribute most to the happiness of the divine nature, are the easiest to be imitated by us. We may be like God in his holiness, that is in his goodness and patience, and mercy, and righteousness, and truth. And these perfections are the very temper and disposition of happiness; for they are the nature of God, who is therefore essentially happy, because he is a being constituted of these perfections. And so far as we imitate God in these, we are *partakers of a divine nature; we dwell in God, and God in us.* So our Apostle tells us in the 4th chapter, verse 16. *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* These divine qualities make us fit company for our heavenly father, and capable of the joys of heaven, and the delights of that glorious place.

And the contrary temper and disposition is the nature of the devil, and the very thing which makes it impossible for him to be happy. Malice, and envy,

and revenge, are unquiet passions; and in what nature soever they are, they are as vexatious and tormentful to it self, as they are troublesome and mischievous to others. These are a hell within us, and are as natural causes of misery, as bodily diseases are of pain and restlessness; and while these furies are in us, nothing without us can make us happy.

The capacity and foundation of all felicity must be laid in the inward frame of our minds, in a godlike temper and disposition. Till the image of his holiness and goodness, which hath been defaced by sin, be renewed upon our minds, we are utterly incapable of the enjoyment of the first and chief good, in which all our felicity does consist.

And thus you see what a necessary connexion there is between our likeness and conformity to God, and the blessed vision and enjoyment of him. All that now remains, is to draw some inferences from what hath been discoursed upon this argument, and so I shall conclude.

I. This shews us, how impossible it is to reconcile a wicked life with the hopes of heaven. The terms of our happiness are firmly and immutably fix'd, like *the foundation of the earth, which cannot be moved*; nay, sooner may *heaven and earth pass away*, than a wicked man enter into the kingdom of heaven. If we continue in a sinful and impenitent state, we must necessarily *come short of the glory of God*. And therefore all those devices which men have found out, to excuse themselves from a holy life, and yet to maintain hopes of getting to heaven at last, are but foolish arts of security, and tricks to undo ourselves quietly, and without any great disturbance. Some think to be saved by an external profession of religion, tho' it have no force and efficacy upon their lives; some by being of the only true church, wherein salvation is to be had: and yet if it were true, that there were any one party or community of christians, out of which there were no salvation, I am sure this likewise is true, that there is no church wherein a wicked man can be saved.

Others rely upon absolutions and indulgences, and hope, notwithstanding all the unrighteousness and ungodliness of their lives, to do their business at last that way. But can any man be so foolish, as to think that any church or priest can forgive a man upon other terms, than those upon which only God hath declared he will forgive sinners?

Others hope to be saved by the righteousness of Christ, without any of their own. But what a presumption is this, to think that any thing that Christ hath done for us, will avail us while we cherish our lusts, and live in the contempt of his laws? *Let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*. The righteousness of Christ shall never be imputed to any for their justification, but those who are *sanctified by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*.

So that nothing can be vainer than a wicked man's hopes of heaven. The whole design of the gospel is, to convince men that blessedness belongs only to the righteous, and that no man that allows himself in any wickedness and impiety of life, shall have any *inheritance in the kingdom of God and Christ*.

II. The consideration of the indispensable necessity of our likeness and conformity to God in holiness and purity, to make us capable of the happiness of the next life, calls loudly upon us, to endeavour after it in this life. So it follows in the words immediately after the text, *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is: and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure*. 'Tis true indeed, nothing but perfect holiness makes us capable of the enjoyment of God, and we cannot be perfectly holy in this life. But then we are to consider, that if we do not purify our selves in some measure in this world, if we do not begin this work here, it will never be perfected hereafter; such dispositions as we carry with us out of this world, stick by us for ever. Indeed, if they be good, the degree of them shall be perfected; but if they be bad, they shall never be alter'd. If the *image of God be renewed upon us* in this life, *we shall be changed from glory to glory*, in the other, *by the spirit of the Lord*. But if we be utterly unlike God when we die, death will make no change in us for the better: we shall *go to our place, and inherit the portion of sinners*. We did not endeavour to be like God, and therefore we can never

be admitted to the blessed sight and enjoyment of him; for there is a direct and eternal opposition between the holy nature of God, and an impure creature; and till this opposition be removed, we can have no communion with him. And 'tis too late to take away this opposition between God and an impure soul in the other world; because our condition is then concluded, and we shall remain for ever such as we have made our selves, while we were in this world.

Now is the time, *this is the day of salvation*. Now we may repent and leave our sins, and purify our selves; and by purity make our selves like to God, and by our likeness to him render our souls capable of being admitted to the blessed sight of him, *in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore*.

So that we ought to resolve upon one of these two things; either to give over all thoughts of happiness in another world; or to qualify our selves for it, by *purifying our selves, as God is pure*: for till we are like God, we are not capable of enjoying him. While we live *in ungodliness and worldly lusts*, we are as unlike God as is possible; and there are but two ways imaginable, whereby to bring a conformity and likeness between God and us, either by changing God or our selves. Now the nature of God is fix'd and immutable, he cannot recede from his holy nature; therefore we must leave our sins. 'Tis certain we cannot change God; therefore we must endeavour to change our selves. Rather think of purifying thy corrupt nature, which may be done; than of making any alteration in God, *with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning*.

Once God hath condescended so far, as to take our nature upon him, to bring us to a participation of his own divine nature, and make us capable of happiness: but if this will not do, we must not expect that God will put off his own nature to make us happy.

SERMON CXXXIII.

Preach'd at WHITEHALL, 1686.

The Wisdom of Religion justified, in the different Ends of good and bad Men.

PROV. XIV. 32.

The Wicked is driven away in his Wickedness: but the Righteous hath Hope in his Death.

Solomon, all along this Book of the *Proverbs*, doth recommend to us religion and the fear of God, by the name, and under the notion of *Wisdom*. Chap. i. 7. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*. Chap. ix. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding*. Hereby signifying to us, that religion is the fundamental principle of wisdom, by which our whole life, and all the actions of it, ought to be conducted and govern'd; and that all wisdom which doth not begin here, and lay religion for a foundation, and which doth not act upon supposition of the truth of the principles of religion, *viz.* the belief of a God, and his providence, of the immortality of our souls, and the rewards and punishments of another life, is but *wisdom falsely so called*; because it is preposterous, and begins at the wrong end, and proceeds upon a false supposition, and wrong scheme of things; and consequently our whole life, and all the actions and designs of it, do run upon a perpetual mistake, and false statings of our own case; and whatever we do pursuant to this mistake, is foolish in it self, and will be fatal in the issue and consequence of it.

For he that takes it for granted that there is no God, and that the world is not governed by the providence of any superior being, but by chance; that his soul dies with his body, and that there is no life after this: He that proceeds upon these principles, is free from all fetters and obligations of conscience, and hath no reason to regard any rule of right and justice, of virtue and goodness, farther than they conduce to his own ease and pleasure, his convenience and safety in this world; he hath nothing to do, but to contrive his own present happiness, and to live as long as he can; and because he knows he must die, to compose himself to undergo it as contentedly, and to bear the pain of it as chearfully and patiently, and to act this last part as decently as he can, being secured by his own principles against all future misery and danger, because death makes an utter end of him.

This is a very consistent theory, and hath but one fault, that it is not true at the bottom, and will fail us when we come to lay our whole weight upon it. It is just as the prophet describes *the staff of the broken reed of Egypt, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it.* Such are the principles of infidelity, to all that trust in them; when they should stand us in most stead, and when we come to lean hard upon them, they will not only fail us, but go into our very heart, and pierce it with sharp pain and anguish. In the days of our health and prosperity, the spirit of a man may bear up it self by its own natural force and strength; and false principles are like anticks in a building, which seem to crouch under the weight of an arch, as if they bore it up, when in truth they are borne up by it. But when these men fall into any great calamity, or death makes towards them in good earnest, then is the trial of these principles, of what strength they are, and what weight they will bear; and we commonly see, that they do not only fail those who trust in them, but they vanish and disappear like dreams and mere illusions of the imagination, when a man awakes out of sleep; and the man that was borne up by them before with so much confidence, can now feel no substance and reality in them; he cannot now be an atheist if he would; but God, and the other world, begin to be as great realities to him, as if they were present to his bodily eye. And now the principles of infidelity are so far from ministring any comfort and good hopes to him, that they fill him with horror, and anguish, and despair; and are so far from quieting his mind, that there is nothing but storm and tempest there. *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.* *The wicked*, that is, the sinner, the harden'd and impenitent sinner, *is driven away*; which may either signify the sudden and violent end many times of bad men, they are carried away as it were by a tempest, answerable to that expression, *Prov. x. 25. As the whirlwind passeth, so the wicked is no more*: or else the word may signify, to be cast down and dejected; and then it imports that trouble and despondency of mind, that anguish and despair, which ariseth from the guilt of a wicked life. *Is driven away in his wickedness*; the word in the original is, *in his evil*, which may either refer to the evil of sin, or of affliction and calamity, and it will come much to one in which sense we take it. According to the first sense of the word *evil*, the meaning will be, that the sinner, when he comes to die, is in great trouble and despondency of mind, because of his wicked life; hath no comfort, no good hopes concerning his future state, according to that other saying of Solomon, *Prov. xi. 23. The expectation of the wicked is wrath.* If we take the word *evil* in the latter sense, for the evil of affliction and calamity, then the meaning is, that bad men, when they fall into any great evil and calamity, more especially upon the approach of death, (for that, as the last and greatest of evils is probably intended, as appears by the opposition in the next words, *the righteous hath hope in his death*;) I say, that bad men, when they fall into any great evil or calamity, especially upon the approach of death, are full of trouble and disquiet, by reason of their guilt, and destitute of all comfort and hope in that needful time. And this is most agreeable to the opposite part of this proverb or sentence, *but the righteous hath hope in his death*; that is, the good man, when any evil and calamity overtakes him, tho' it be the most terrible of all, death it self, is full of peace, and comfort, and good hopes; when there is nothing but storms without, all is calm within, he hath something which still supports him and bears him up.

So that *Solomon*, in this sentence or proverb, seems to design to recommend religion and virtue to us, from the consideration of the different ends of good and bad men, so obvious to common observation, and generally speaking, and for the most part, which (as I have often observed) is all the truth that is to be expected in moral and proverbial speeches; that for the most part, the end of good men is full of peace and comfort, and good hopes of their future condition: but the end of bad men quite contrary, full of anguish and trouble, of horror and despair, without peace or comfort, or hope of any good to befall them afterwards. The righteous man hath great peace and serenity in his mind at that time; is not only contented, but glad to die; does not only submit and yield to it, but desires it as much better. And so some read the words, *the righteous desires or hopes to die*: but the wicked man and the sinner dreads the thoughts and approaches of death, quits life with great reluctancy, clings to it, and hangs upon it as long as he can, and is not without great violence parted from it. The good man goes out of the world willingly and contentedly: but the wicked is *driven away*, not without great force and constraint, with much reluctancy, and in great trouble and perplexity of mind, what will become of him for ever.

You see the meaning of the words, that they contain a great truth, and very well worthy of our most attentive regard and consideration; because, if this be generally and for the most part true, which *Solomon* here asserts, then this is a mighty testimony on the behalf of piety and virtue, and plainly shews, that the principles of religion and virtue are proof against all assaults to which human nature is liable; and that the principles of infidelity and vice do shrink and give back when it comes to the trial. And this, to any wise and considerate man, is as good as a demonstration, that the religious man is in the right, and proceeds upon principles of sound and true wisdom, and *hath chosen the better part*: but that the infidel and the wicked man is in the wrong, and under a fatal mistake, which he seldom discerns, till it be too late to rectify it.

Now in the handling of this argument, I shall do these *three* things;

First, I shall shew, that this observation of *Solomon*, concerning the different end of good and bad men, and the final issue and event of a virtuous and vitious course of life, is generally true, and that the exceptions on either side to the contrary are but few, and not of force to infringe the truth of the observation.

Secondly, I shall consider whence this difference proceeds, and I shall endeavour to shew that it is founded in the true nature and reason of things. And,

Thirdly, That if this be true, it is a demonstration on the side of religion, and does fully justify the wisdom of it.

First, I shall endeavour to shew, that this observation of *Solomon*, concerning the different end of good and bad men, and the final issue and event of a virtuous and vitious course of life, is generally found true, and that the exceptions on either side to the contrary are but few in comparison, and by no means of sufficient force to infringe the general truth of this observation; I say, that this observation of the wise man, is generally and for the most part true, which (as I mentioned before) is all the truth that is to be expected in moral and proverbial sentences. And for this I appeal to the common and daily experience of mankind, whether we do not generally see religious and good men to have great ease and comfort, and sometimes great joy and transport in their minds, from the reflection upon an innocent and useful, an holy and virtuous course of life. *David* was so confident of this, that he appeals to common observation and experience for the truth of it, *Psal. xxxvii. 37. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.* Or as this text is rendered in our old translation, *keep innocency, take heed to the thing that is right: for that shall bring a man peace at the last.* And he gives the reason of this, Ver. 39. because God stands by them to support them in this needful time, with the comfortable hopes of his salvation; *the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, he is their help in the time of trouble.* As they have sincerely endeavoured to serve God, so they have great hopes and confidence of his mercy and goodness to them, that

he will stand by them, and support them in their greatest distress, and guide and conduct them to happiness at the last; and in this confidence they can say with David, Psal. xvi. 8, 9, 11. *I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* And Psal. xxxi. 5. *Into thy hand I commit my spirit, O Lord God of truth.* And Psal. xlviii. 14. *This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death.* And again, Psal. lxxiii. 23, 24, 25, 26. *Nevertheless, I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Thus a good man, not only in the contemplation of death, and upon the approach of it, but even under the very pangs of it, is apt to comfort himself, in the divine mercy and goodness, and to rejoice in the hopes of the glory of God.

But the wicked, on the contrary, when death makes its approach towards them, the guilt of their wicked lives flies in their faces, and disturbs their minds, and fills them with horror and amazement, with a fearful expectation of judgement, and fiery indignation to consume them. The expectation of the wicked is wrath, saith Solomon, Prov. xi. 23. *What is the hope of the hypocrite, that is, of the wicked man, when God shall take away his soul?* Job xxvii. 8. In their lifetime they neglected God and religion, and perhaps denied him, or said unto him with those in the 21st. Chap. Ver. 14. *depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;* and when they come to die, they find that God is departed from them. They have not the confidence to look up to him, or to expect any mercy or favour from him, being conscious to themselves, that they have denied the God which is above, or at least neglected and despised him; and now the terrors of the Almighty take hold of them, and his arrows stick fast in them, and wound their consciences, and they cannot pluck them out, or get rid of them; their spirits are ready to sink within them, and the principles of infidelity which they once relied upon, now fail them, and instead of ministering any comfort and confidence to them, they pierce them to the heart, and are the greatest ground of their trouble and despair.

So that here is a very visible and remarkable difference between good and bad men when they come to die. Good men have commonly a great calm and serenity in their minds, are full of good hopes of the mercy and favour of God to them, and of the sense of his loving kindness, which is better than life it self; and are willing to leave this world, in the comfortable expectation and assurance of a better condition after death; and not only willing, but many times heartily glad, that they are going out of this vale of tears, out of this sink of sin and sorrows, that they are quitting these drooping mansions, and exchanging these earthly tabernacles, for a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens: whereas the wicked is full of trouble and anguish, and his mind in greater pain and disorder than his body; all storm and tempest, like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest: there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. And how can there be peace, when his whoredoms and adulteries, his repeated acts of drunkenness and intemperance, his profane oaths and blasphemies, have been so many? When he is conscious to himself what a life he hath led, and is thoroughly awakened to a just sense of the evil of his doings? And when death makes up to him, how does he dread the sight and thoughts of it, and how does he hanker after life, as if all his happiness depended upon it, and ended with it? And at last, like the young man in the gospel, he goes away sorrowful, because, perhaps, he had great possessions in this world, and hath no hopes at all in the other. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed to him by God.

There are, I confess, some exceptions to the contrary on both sides; but they are but few in comparison, and by no means sufficient to infringe the general truth of this observation.

On the one hand, some good men are very melancholy and dispirited, when they

they come to die, and leave the world full of fears and jealousies concerning their future condition; and this may proceed from several causes. Perhaps they are naturally of a dark and melancholy temper, which is usually heightened and increased by bodily weakness and distemper; and in this case it is no wonder, if the considerations of religion be not sufficient to scatter these clouds, and to over-rule and correct the irregularities of our bodily temper; because the principles and considerations of religion do not work naturally and by way of physick, but morally, and by way of conviction and counsel. Sometimes this fear and dejection of mind in good men, proceeds from mere lowness and faintness of spirit, naturally caused by the load and continuance of the distemper which they labour under, and by which the mind is likewise in some degree weakened and broken; and when this happens, it is usually very visible, and consequently the account of it easy and obvious; and sometimes perhaps we are charitably mistaken in our good man, and either he is not a sincerely good man, or not so good as we took him to be; perhaps his life hath been very unequal, and full of great failings: and in either case it is no wonder, if the man have not that peace and comfort, which is answerable to our good opinion of him; if the man be not sincerely good, there is no real foundation of peace and comfort; for *the hope of the hypocrite shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure,* as one of Job's friends speaks, *Job. viii. 14, 15.* And *Ver. 20. Behold, God will not cast away a perfect, or sincere, man; neither will he help, or support, the evil doers.* Or tho' he have been in the main a good man, yet perhaps with a great mixture of imperfection, and many great failings, and neglects; and then it is no wonder, if his mind be not so calm, and clear of doubts and jealousies concerning his condition: for proportionably to the breaches and inequalities of our obedience, and our more and greater failings, will our peace and comfort, living and dying, be naturally abated and interrupted. But these cases are not many, it is sufficient that it is generally otherwise with good men, and that their end is peace. And this is so remarkable, that *Balaam*, when he was reckoning up the blessings and privileges of the people of *Israel*, the type of good men in all ages, he takes particular notice of their happy end, as a most signal and invaluable blessing; which made him break out into that wish, *Numb. xxiii. 10. Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*

And on the other hand, it cannot be denied, but that some very bad men (as bad as we can well imagine) have pass'd out of this world, not only quiet and undisturbed, but with a great deal of courage and resolution. And this I believe in fact and experience, at least according to my best observation, is the more rare case of the two; for a notorious bad man to die in perfect peace, than for a good man to die in great trouble and perplexity of mind. But this, when it happens, may probably enough be ascribed to one or more of these causes, either to the mistake of the by-standers, who take silence for peace; and because the man is of a strong resolution, and hath a good command of himself, and does not think fit to trouble others, in a matter in which he thinks they can give him no comfort and relief, they interpret this to be tranquillity of mind; because he holds his peace and says nothing, they think he hath peace, and that all is quiet within. But I remember the observation of a very wise historian, *Phil. Comines*, who says, that he knew in his time several great persons, who in ordinary conversation, and to a superficial view, seemed to be very happy and contented; but yet to them who knew them more intimately, and in their private freedoms and recesses, were the most miserable and discontented persons in the world. This I confess is very rare, for men to conceal a very great trouble, and more yet for a man to dissemble when dying; and yet there is reason to believe it sometimes happens.

Sometimes the quiet death of a very bad man, proceeds from stupidity, and want of a just sense of the danger of his condition, and this from want of discipline and instruction in the nature and principles of religion: this temper looks like courage, because it is fearless of danger; but this fearlessness is founded in great ignorance and want of apprehension; whereas a true courage dis-

cerns the danger, and yet thinks it fit and reasonable to venture upon it. Now this stupidity of dying men, who have lived very ill, is commonly the case of such as have been brought up in great ignorance, and have lived in great sensuality, by which means their spirits are immers'd, and even stifled in carnality and sense; and no wonder, if they who live like beasts, die after the same manner. And thus our Saviour represents the rich glutton in the parable, as never coming to himself, and a sense of his condition, till he was awakened by the flames of hell; *Luke xvi. 22, 23. The rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment.* As if he had never been awakened till then, his voluptuous and sensual course of life rendring him insensible of another world.

Or else this false peace may be ascribed to the delusion of false principles, by virtue whereof it is often seen, that men die in a very bad cause, not only without any regret and trouble, but with chearfulness and satisfaction: and this is not to be wonder'd at, because every man's conscience is a kind of God to him; and whether a man be in the right or wrong, so long as he thinks he does well, *and his heart condemns him not*, he is apt to have confidence towards God; but for all that it greatly concerns every man to take great care to inform his conscience. For if men will not be impartial in their enquiry after truth, and be not ready to receive it in the love of it, St. Paul tells us, *that for this very cause, God may send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lye, and that they might be damned, because they believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*, 2 Thes. x. 11, 12. that is, in falshood and imposture: for so the word *ἀδμία*, which is here rendred *unrighteousness*, is sometimes used in the New Testament.

And this is the last cause I shall mention, to which the false peace of wicked men when they come to die, is to be ascribed, *viz.* to the just judgment of God, who permits great sinners to be so hardened in an evil course, as neither living nor dying to be awakened to a sense of their condition; such as the Apostle speaks of, 1 Tim. iv. 2. who are said to have *their consciences seared, as it were, with a hot iron*. This, it is to be hoped, is but the case of a few, that are thus utterly forsaken of God, and left to perish in their own hardness and obstinacy. This is like a gangrene in the body, which mortifies the part, and leaves it without sense, and thereby incapable of recovery. I proceed, in the

Second place, to shew whence this difference between good and bad men, when they come to die, does proceed. And here I shall endeavour to shew, that this difference is founded in the true nature and reason of the things themselves; in the nature of religion and virtue, and of impiety and vice, in the different ways and courses of good and bad men, which do naturally tend to these different ends.

And to make out this more clearly and distinctly, I shall endeavour to manifest these *two* things.

I. That a religious and virtuous life, is a real ground of peace and serenity of mind, of comfort and joy, under all the evils and calamities of life, and especially at the hour of death.

II. That impiety and wickedness is a real foundation of guilt and fear, of horror and despair in the day of adversity and affliction, and more especially in the approaches of death.

I. That a religious and virtuous life is a real ground of peace and serenity of mind, of comfort and joy, under all the evils and calamities of life, and especially at the hour of death.

Under the evils and calamities of life, innocency is a great stay and support to our minds under sufferings, and will bear up our spirits, when nothing else can; especially if a man suffer for a good conscience, *and for righteousness sake*: because then, beside the comfort of innocency, we are entitled in a special manner to the favour of God, and the comforts and supports of his holy spirit, and the hopes of a glorious reward from that God, for whose sake and in whose cause we suffer. All trouble is tolerable to him who hath no burden of guilt upon his mind, to him who is at peace with his own conscience, and at peace with God, and is assured of his favour and friendship, of his providence and care, of his approbation and reward; this is a firm ground, not only of patience, but
of

of Joy to a good man, in the saddest and most dismal condition he can fall into. *Unto the upright (saith the Psalmist) there ariseth light in darkness,* Psal. 112.

4. And no wonder, because he that fears God, and serves him faithfully, and suffers for him patiently, hath laid a sure foundation of comfort to himself, hath sown the seeds of contentment and peace, of joy and gladness in his own mind, which will spring up and flourish most, when we are in the most destitute and afflicted condition: *light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart,* says David, Psal. xcvi. 11. *The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever,* saith the Prophet, Esa. xxxii. 17.

And more especially at the hour of death, then the comfort of a good man overflows, and *he lifts up his head with joy, because his redemption draweth nigh*: then the reflection upon a well-spent and unspotted life, fills his soul with abundant consolation, with *joy unspeakable and full of glory*: for God, and the things of another world, appear more real and substantial to him, as he draws near to them, and his faith begins to be turned into sight and fruition; he now stands upon the confines of both worlds, and discerns more clearly the vanity and emptiness of that which he is going from, and the substantial and durable happiness of that which he is entering into. Here is the trial of our faith, and the proof of religion, by the real fruits and effects of it, in the peace and comfort which it gives to a good man, when he is leaving this world; so that *when he walks thro' the valley of death, he fears no ill*, and his hopes are then most lively and vigorous, when he is ready to give up the ghost; the voice of nature, and of every man's reason and conscience, as well as scripture, *says to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings; but wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.* Which brings me to the

II^d Thing, namely, that impiety and wickedness is a real foundation of guilt and fear, of horror and despair, in the day of adversity and affliction, and especially in the approaches of death.

And how can it be otherwise, when all inward support and comfort fail him, and all sorts of evil and calamity, inward and outward, assault him, and break in upon him at once? When the principles of infidelity fail him, and what he hath made out so speciously to himself, vanisheth into nothing, *as a dream when one awakens, and as a vision in the night*? For when any great calamity befalls this man, God, *who was not before in all his thoughts*, then begins to appear terrible to him, and he cannot banish the thoughts and fear of him out of his mind. But how uncomfortable is this, to be convinc'd there is a God, when a man hath most need of him, and can least hope for his favour and pity?

But especially at the approach of death, what a sad preparation for that is an impious and wicked life; how does his conscience then fly in his face, and how bitter is the remembrance of those sins which he committed with so much pleasure and greediness? What a terror is the almighty to him, and the apprehension of that vengeance that threatens him, and that eternal misery which is ready to swallow him up? And in the midst of all this anguish and horror, which naturally spring from an evil conscience, and the guilt of a wicked life, he is destitute of all comfort and hope; *he hath denied the God that is above*, and now he dares not look up to him: his whole life hath been a continued affront to the divine majesty, and an insolent defiance of his justice; and what hopes can he now reasonably have of his mercy? *Of the God that formed him, he hath been unmindful*, and hath used him with all the despite he could; and therefore he hath all the reason in the world to conclude, *that he that made him will not save him, and he that formed him will have no mercy on him.* And this is the natural consequence of impiety and wickedness, it fills the soul of a dying sinner with trouble and anguish, with guilt and despair, when he is leaving the world, and puts him into the most dismal condition that can be imagin'd on this side hell, and very like to it, without comfort, and without hope. I proceed to the

Third and last thing I propos'd, *viz.* that if this be true, it is a demonstration on the side of religion, and doth fully justify and acquit the wisdom of it, and that upon these three accounts:

I. Because

I. Because the principles of religion, and the practice of them in a virtuous life, when they come to the last and utmost trial, do hold out, and are a firm and unshaken foundation of peace and comfort to us.

II. That they minister comfort to us in the most needful and desirable time.

III. That when men are commonly more serious, and sober, and impartial, and when their declarations and words are thought to be of greatest weight and credit, they give this testimony to religion and virtue, and against impiety and vice.

I. That the principles of religion, and the practice of them in a virtuous life, when they come to the last and utmost trial, do hold out, and are a firm and unshaken foundation of peace and comfort to good men, at that time. The belief of a God, and of his providence and care of good men, and that *he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*; the persuasion of our own immortality, and of the eternal recompence of another world; *that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and to purchase eternal life and happiness for those, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality*: I say, the belief of these things, is commonly most strong and vigorous in the minds of good men, when they come to die; and they have then a more clear apprehension, and firm persuasion of the truth and reality of these things, than ever they had in any time of their lives, and find more comfort from them, more peace and joy in the belief of them. And this is the great time of trial, when death presents it self to us, and the terrors of it compass us about, whether upon occasion of persecution or sickness. These are *the rains, and storms, and winds*, which will try upon what foundation our peace and comfort is built; and nothing but the principles of religion, sincerely believed and practised, will make us firm and impregnable against these assaults. So our Saviour assures us, *Mat. vii. 24, 25. Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them; that is, believes and practiseth my doctrine, I will liken him to a wise man, which built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.*

And on the contrary, the principles of infidelity and vice, are most apt to shrink and give back at such a time: nay, for the most part they vanish and disappear, and upon the apprehension of death, a new light as it were springs up in their minds, and things appear quite contrary to that scheme which they had form'd, and which they had taken so much pains to maintain and make probable to themselves; and that hypothesis which they had been so long a building, appears now to have no foundation, and falls at once, and all their hopes together with it. And now the infidel *believes and trembles*, is sensible of his wicked life, and of the vengeance that hangs over him, and was never in his life half so well satisfied of the principles of infidelity, as he is now convinc'd of the contrary, to his infinite trouble and confusion, that there is a God, and another life after this, and a terrible punishment to the workers of iniquity.

And daily experience confirms to us the certainty and truth of this matter, and that there is this difference for the most part very visible in the temper and carriage of good and bad men, when they come to die.

II. The principles of religion and virtue do minister comfort to us in the most needful and desirable times; and on the contrary, the principles of infidelity and vice do not only fail us in the *day of distress*, but give great trouble to us at the most unreasonable time.

And this makes a mighty difference between the condition of these two sorts of persons: for when would a man desire to be at peace and quiet in his mind, but when his body is restless, and in pain? When would a man wish for *strong consolation and hope*, that *anchor of the soul sure and steadfast*, as the Apostle to the Hebrews calls it, but in that last and terrible conflict of nature, with *the last of enemies, which is death*? And when would a man dread trouble and anguish of mind, but at such a time, when he is hardly able to sustain his bodily pains and infirmities? If it be true of every *day* of our lives, *sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*, much more of the day of death: it is enough surely to have that one enemy to encounter, at which nature startles, and our best reason can hardly furnish us with force enough for the conflict, even when the *sting of death*

death is taken away, I mean the guilt of an evil conscience: but when all evils assail a man at once, pains without, and terrors within, a weak body, and a wounded spirit, an incurable disease, and intolerable despair, death ready to assault us, and hell following it; how unseasonable is the conjuncture of so many and so great evils? Wise men are wont to provide with great care against such a time, that they may not be oppressed with too many troubles at once; and therefore in the time of their health, they settle their worldly concerns, and make their wills, that when sickness or death comes, they may have no care upon them, nothing to do but to die. This is a time, when all the force of our reason, and all the comfort and hope that Religion can give, will be little enough to give us a quiet and undisturbed passage out of this world into the other: and we shall be very miserable, if the terrors and stings of a guilty conscience, and the pangs of death do seize upon us at once. And therefore a wise man would make it the business of his whole life, to prevent this unhappy concurrence of evils, so insupportable to human nature; and to render death, which is grievous and terrible enough of itself, as comfortable and easy as 'tis possible. For if there were nothing beyond this life, yet it were worth the while to provide for a quiet death; and if men were sure to be possessed of these passions of hope and fear, of comfort and despair, which usually attend good and bad men when they come to die, there is no man that calculates things wisely, would, for all the pleasures of sin, forfeit the peace and comfort of a righteous Soul, going out of the world full of the hopes of a blessed immortality; and endure the anguish and torment of a guilty conscience, and the amazing terrors of a despairing and dying sinner. This is a condition so sad and fearful, that a wise man would avoid it upon any terms.

III. When men are commonly more serious, and sober, and impartial, and their declarations and words are thought to be of greatest weight and credit, they give this testimony to Religion and Virtue, and against impiety and vice.

It is generally seen, when men come to die, that the manner of their death is answerable to the course of their life; that the reflection upon a holy and virtuous life, is a great ease and comfort to mens minds: and on the contrary, the guilt of a wicked life is apt to fly in their faces, and to disturb their minds, and fill them with horror. And this is a critical time, when the consciences of men are usually awake, and apt to pass an impartial judgment and censure upon themselves. And for this, the infidel may believe one of his own great authors, I mean *Lucretius*, who observes, that when men are in distress, and the apprehensions of death are upon them, Religion doth then shew its force:

Acrius advertunt animos ad religionem,

“ The thoughts of it are then more pungent and powerful upon their minds.

*Nam veræ voces tum demum pectore ab imo
Eliciuntur, & eripitur persona, manet res.*

“ Mens words then come from the bottom of their hearts, the mask is taken off,
“ and things then appear to them as indeed they are.

Now, that when men are so impartial and in good earnest, when they stand upon the confines of both worlds, and can view them at once, when they are leaving this world, and are now no longer in danger of being blinded or flattered, or tempted by it, and are just ready to pass into the other world, and so much the more likely to discern the reality of it, as they approach nearer to it; I say, that in these circumstances, men generally declare on the side of piety and virtue, and declaim most vehemently against their sins and vices; that generally speaking, and according to what is commonly seen in experience, the man who hath led a religious and virtuous life, is, when he comes to die, quiet and easy to himself, hath no regret at what he hath done, no severe and angry reflections upon the strict course of a virtuous life, his conscience doth not accuse or upbraid, or terrify him, for having lived *soberly, and righteously, and godly in this*

world; nay, so far from this, that if he have any trouble, it is not because he hath lived piously and virtuously, but because he hath not lived more so, because he hath come short of his duty, and hath been so imperfectly and inconstantly good: that generally dying men repent of their evil actions, and are troubled for them; but no man ever repented himself of serving God, and doing good. This surely is a great testimony on the side of Religion and Virtue, because it is the testimony not only of the friends to Religion, but of those who have been the greatest enemies to it, and at a time when they are most likely to declare the inward sense of their minds, and to speak most impartially, without design or disguise. When the ungodly man and the sinner comes to lie upon a death-bed, he hath then other apprehensions of things than he had, or would own to have in the days of his health and prosperity, and his Soul is full of sadness and trouble, of perplexity and anguish, of fear and despair, because of the wicked and leud life which he hath led. But why art thou so dismayed, man? why so troubled and cast down, so restless and unquiet, so wretched and miserable in thine own thoughts?

If thou hast done well in renouncing the principles of Religion, and breaking loose from all obligations of duty and conscience, in gratifying thine inclinations and lusts, why art thou now troubled at it? If thou wert in the right all the while, why dost thou not now stand to it, and justify thy actings, and bear up like a man? If the principles thou wentest upon were sound and firm, why dost thou not still take comfort and support from them? Why does thy heart faint, and thy spirit sink within thee? How comes thy imagination to be so disturbed with such frightful appearances, and to haunt thee continually with such vain and groundless terrors? Whence is it that those who have taken a contrary course, and lived a quite different life, have so much the advantage of thee, in the comfort, and peace, and tranquillity of their minds when they come to die?

But if thou hast been in the wrong, and dost now discern real cause for so much trouble and fear, why didst thou not consider in time? why wast thou not troubled sooner, when trouble would have done thee good, and a great part of the anguish which thou now feelest, and all the misery thou art so afraid of, might effectually have been prevented?

I think it is said by those who are concerned, to take off the force of this terrible objection against infidelity and a wicked life; that when men are in a dying condition, their spirits are low, and their understandings weak and disturbed, and their minds thrown off the hinges; and therefore it is no wonder if they want that firmness and resolution of spirit, that consideration and courage, which they had in the time of their health.

This is speciously said, and with some shew and appearance of reason: but it does by no means answer, and take off the objection. For if this were a true reason at the bottom, why is it not true on both sides? why are not both sorts of men, when they are sick and near to die, those who have lived piously and virtuously, as well as the loose and wicked livers, equally troubled? why are they not disturbed and afraid alike? Hath not sickness the same natural effect upon them, and does it not equally weaken and disorder their minds? But we see generally in experience a plain and remarkable difference between these two sorts of men, when they come to die; so plain, that it is not to be denied; and so remarkable, that there must be some considerable cause of it; and so general and constant, that it cannot without great folly and perverseness be imputed to chance. Now what can we imagine should be the reason of this palpable difference between good and bad men, when they are under the apprehensions of death, but this, that a pious and virtuous life is a real ground of peace and joy, of comfort and confidence at that time; and that impiety and wickedness are a real foundation of guilt and fear, of horror and despair in a dying hour: in a word, that the different ways and courses of good and bad men, do naturally lead to these different ends, and produce these different effects?

Either this must be granted, and then the whole cause of infidelity and vice is yielded and given up at once; or else men must fly to that which seems the most unreasonable and extravagant paradox in the world, and does effectually give up the cause another way, *viz.* That a false opinion of things, and a mere delusion, is
more

more apt to support the fainting spirits of a dying man, and to give him more comfort and hope in the day of distress, than a right and well-grounded persuasion.

But this (as I said before) does effectually give up the cause another way: for if this be true, then certainly they are rightest that are in the wrong; and Religion, tho' it were a mistake, ought to be embraced and entertained by a wise man, because of this great benefit and comfort of it. If this be truly the case, then every wise man must say, Let me be so deceived; Let it be my lot and portion, to live and die in so pleasant, and comfortable, and happy an error, as that of Religion is.

So that whether Religion be true or false, it must according to this reasoning, be necessarily granted to be the only wise principle, and safe hypothesis for a man to live and die by. And this very thing that it is so, is a strong evidence of the truth of Religion, and even a demonstration of the real excellency of Virtue; because no other supposition but that of Religion, does so clearly solve all appearances, and so fully and exactly answer the natural desires, and hopes, and fears of mankind. If the being of God, and the obligations of Religion and Virtue be admitted, this gives an easy account of the whole matter, and shews us, that sin and vice are the foundation of guilt and trouble; and that Religion and Virtue do naturally produce peace and comfort: for that is to be esteemed and reckoned the natural effect of any thing, which doth generally belong to the whole kind. If those who live religiously and virtuously, have generally peace and comfort when they come to die, and those who live wickedly are commonly full of guilt and remorse, of fear and perplexity at that time; this is reason enough to believe, that these are the natural effects of those causes: and that men when they come to die, are, according as they have lived, afraid of the divine justice, and of the vengeance of another world, or confident of God's goodness, and the rewards of another life, is a strong argument of a superior Being that governs the world, and will reward men according to their works; because no supposition but this doth answer the natural hopes and fears of men. And this likewise is an argument of the immortality of our souls, and of the rewards and punishments of another life; and as good a demonstration of the reality and excellency of Religion and Virtue, from these happy effects of it, as the nature of the thing is capable of.

And now to make some reflexions upon what has been said upon this argument.

First, The consideration of the different ends of good and bad men, is a mighty encouragement to piety and a good life. Nothing in this world shews us so remarkable a difference between the righteous and the wicked, as a death-bed. Then a good man most sensibly enjoys the comfort of a good life, and *the peaceable fruits of righteousness*; and the sinner then begins to reap the bitter fruits of sin. What a difference is there then, between the comfort and trouble, the composure and disturbance, the hopes and fears of these two persons? And next to the actual possession of blessedness, the comfortable hopes and expectation of it are the greatest happiness; and next to being plunged into it, the fearful apprehensions of eternal misery are the greatest torment. *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness*, is violently hurried out of the world full of guilt and trouble. What storms and tempests are then raised in his mind, from the fear of God's justice, and the despair of his mercy? But *the righteous hath hope in his death*. The reflection upon a holy and virtuous life, and the conscience of a man's uprightness and sincerity, are a spring of joy and peace to him, which refresheth his mind with unspeakable comfort and pleasure, under the very pangs of death. With what triumph and exultation of spirit doth the blessed Apostle St. Paul, upon the review of his labours and sufferings for God and his Truth, speak of his dissolution? 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8. *For I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.* He speaks with such a lively sense of it, as if he had his crown in his view, and were just ready to take hold of it. And what would not a man give, what would he not be contented to do and suffer to be thus affected, when

he comes to leave the world, and to be able to bear the thoughts of his death and dissolution with so composed and cheerful a mind? And yet this is the natural and genuine effect of a holy and useful life. And that which the same Apostle tells us, was the ground of his rejoicing under sufferings, is likewise the comfort and support of good men at the time of their death, 2 Cor. i. 12. *Our rejoicing, saith he, is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.* All the holy and virtuous actions of our lives, are so many seeds of peace and comfort to us at the hour of our death, which we shall more sensibly enjoy, when we come to depart this life. For then the consciences of men are apt to deal most freely and impartially with them; and *if our hearts do not then condemn us, we may have comfort and confidence towards God.*

I believe there are some very pious and good souls, who have lived very disconsolate and full of doubtings, and been under a cloud the greatest part of their lives, who yet upon the approach of death, and just as they were leaving the world, have broken forth, as the sun sometimes doth just before his setting. I know it is not always thus; there are, I doubt not, some good men who go out of this world with little or no comfort; and yet so soon as they step into another world, are encompassed with *joy unspeakable and full of glory*: and though the comfort of such persons be not so early and forward, yet it cannot chuse but be extremely welcome: and it must needs put a doubting and trembling soul into a strange kind of extasy and ravishment, to be thus unexpectedly surprized with happiness.

Secondly, Since this is so great and evident a testimony of the truth and goodness of Religion, is it not a strange thing, and to be wondered at, that true Religion and Virtue should be so little practised, and impiety and vice should so generally prevail in the world, against so many bars and obstacles, and against such invincible objections to the contrary? Not only against our inward judgment and conscience, but against the general sense and experience of men in all ages, the constant declarations and testimonies of dying men, both good and bad, when they are most serious, and their words are thought to be of greatest credit and weight; against the best and soberest reason of mankind, and their true interest and happiness; against the health of mens bodies, and, which is the most dear and valuable thing in the world, the peace and quiet of their minds; and that not only in the time of life and health, but in the hour of death, when men stand most in need of comfort and support: in a word, against the grain of human nature, and in despite of mens natural fears of divine vengeance, and to the defeating of all our hopes of a blessed immortality in another world, and against the inflexible nature and reason of things, by no art or endeavour of man, by no colours of wit, or subtilty of discourse, by no practice or custom to the contrary, by no conspiracy and combination of men, ever to be changed or altered? So that we may say with *David, Have all the workers of wickedness no knowledge,* no consideration of themselves, no tenderness and regard to their present and future interest? Nay, if there were no life after this, setting aside the case of extreme suffering and persecution, Religion and Virtue are certainly to be chosen, not only for our contentment in life, but for our comfort in death: and if there be a state of happiness or misery remaining for men after death, as most assuredly there is, much more in order to the attaining of that endless happiness, and the avoiding of that eternal and intolerable misery. *O that men were wise, that they understood this, and would consider their latter end!*

S E R M O N CXXXIV.

The Usefulness of considering our latter End.

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THE title of this psalm tells us who was the author of it. It is called, *A prayer of Moses, the man of God*; or, as the Chaldee paraphrase more expressly, *The prayer which Moses, the prophet of the Lord, prayed, when the people of the house of Israel sinned in the wilderness*. Upon which provocation of theirs, God in great displeasure threatned, and was immutably resolved that they should all perish in the wilderness, and that none of the men that came out of *Egypt*, *Caleb* and *Joshua* only excepted, should enter into the promised land, but should all die in the space of forty years.

Upon this occasion, *Moses* made this psalm or prayer to God, being a devout meditation upon the shortness and frailty of human life, which was now brought into a much narrower compass than in former ages. But the case of that people was different from that of the rest of mankind, being limited and confined to *forty years*. They might die sooner than that time; but that was the utmost bound of their lives, which none were to exceed; which seems to be the ground and reason of the petition, which *Moses* puts up to God in the text, *So teach us, &c.*

For I do not think that *Moses* does here beg of God, to reveal to every one of them the precise end and term of his life; that might seem to savour of too much presumption or curiosity: but since they knew that according to the ordinary course of nature, the life of man was then reduced to *threescore and ten*, or *four score years*; and since God by a peremptory sentence had pronounced, that, two persons only excepted, all that vast number which came out of *Egypt*, and even *Moses* himself, should die within the compass of *forty years*; it was a very pious and proper request, which *Moses* here puts up for himself and the rest of that people, that God would give them wisdom to make a right use of the notice which they had of their end, since it might happen at any time, but could not reach beyond *forty years*, reckoning from the time of their coming out of *Egypt*.

To know the determinate time of our life, or to know certainly that our life shall not exceed such a term, (which was the case of the *Israelites* in the wilderness) is a very awakening thing, and does commonly rouse men more than the general consideration of our own frailty and mortality. And yet to a wise and considerate man, it ought in reason to be the same: for that which will certainly be, ought to be reckoned upon and provided for; and if it be uncertain when it will be, whether at some distance, or the next moment, we ought presently to take care about it, and to be always in a readiness for it, lest we should be surprized and overtaken.

And then this prayer is as proper for us, as it was for *Moses* and the *Israelites*, though we are not just under the same circumstances that they were. They were under a peremptory sentence of death within *forty years*, and none of them knew how much sooner they might be taken away: and this is not much different from our case; for we are liable to death at any time, every day, every moment; and how few of us in this congregation can reasonably either hope or expect to have our lives prolonged beyond the term of *forty years*? Nay, it is very probable, that not one of us in a hundred will hold out so long. And then this prayer may be as fit for us, as it was for *Moses* and the *Israelites*, that God would *teach us so to number our days*; that is, to make such an account of the shortness
and

and uncertainty of our lives, and so to consider and lay to heart our latter end, *that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*; that is, that we may manage and conduct this frail, and short, and uncertain life, in the best manner, and to the wisest purposes.

And this consideration of our latter end was always esteemed by the wisest men, a principal part and main point of wisdom. *Socrates*, who was by the general consent of wise men (a more infallible Oracle than that of *Apollo*) esteemed the wisest of all the philosophers, gives us this definition of *Philosophy*, that *it is the meditation or study of death*; to intimate to us, that this is true wisdom, to be much in the thoughts of our latter end, and in a constant readiness and preparation for it. And this a greater than *Socrates* had long before him observed to be a chief point of *Wisdom*, I mean *Moses the man of God*, that divine person and prince of the ancient Prophets, not only in this psalm, but also in his last divine song, a little before his death; in which he makes this the sum of all his wishes for the people of *Israel*, that God would endow them with this high point of wisdom, *Deut. xxxii. 29. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!* This is true *Wisdom* and *Philosophy*, to consider our latter end.

And this, by God's assistance, shall be the argument which I intend to handle from these words; namely, to shew what influence and effect the serious consideration of our latter end, and of the shortness and uncertainty of this present life, ought in reason to have upon us. And of this I shall give you an account in these following particulars:

I. The meditation of our latter end should make us to take into consideration our whole lives, and our whole duration, that we may resolve and act accordingly. And this is a main point of wisdom, to understand ourselves, and the nature of our Beings, of what we consist, and for what duration we are designed; whether we consist only of matter a little better fashioned and moulded, and made up into a more curious and complicated engine, consisting of many secret and hidden springs and wheels, and fitted for greater variety of motions, and for more fine and subtle operations, than the bodies of those other creatures which we esteem below us: Or whether we be endowed with a spiritual principle, wholly distinct from Matter, and capable not only of sense, but of acts of Reason, and of the impressions of Religion, from the apprehension of a Deity and a superior Being that is of it self, and made us and all other things. In a word, whether we shall *die like beasts*; or whether there be *an immortal spirit within us*, which hath no dependance upon Matter and the bodily and visible part of our selves, but is *a much better and enduring substance*, which hath no principle of corruption in itself, but shall survive these perishing bodies, and when they are mouldered into dust, shall subsist in a happy or miserable condition, according as we have behaved ourselves in this world.

For these are two very different hypotheses and schemes of things, and ought to affect us very differently, and to inspire us with different resolutions, and to put us upon a quite contrary method and conduct of our lives.

For on the one hand, if we be well assured, that we shall be utterly extinguish'd by death, *like the beasts that perish*, then we have nothing to take care of but our bodies, because we are nothing else; then we need not extend our thoughts, our hopes, or fears, beyond this world, and this present life; because we have nothing to do, but to please ourselves with present enjoyments, and to live so with other men, as may make most for our temporal quiet, and satisfaction and security.

But then we are to consider very well, whether these things be certainly so, and whether we may rely upon it, and whether it will bear all that weight which we lay upon it; whether these principles will not fail us, when we come most to stand in need of the comfort and support of them, and when death is in view, and making up towards us, quite vanish and disappear: because it is of infinite consequence to us, to be well assured of this, since our happiness or misery to all eternity depends upon it. And therefore nothing less than a demonstration of the impossibility of the thing, of our having immortal spirits that shall survive our bodies, and subsist apart from them, and be extremely miserable or happy in another world: I say, nothing but a demonstration of the impossibility of this, ought

to be satisfaction to us in a case of so great danger, and upon which so much does depend,

For if there be a possibility on the other side, of our having immortal souls, which shall live for ever in another world, nothing can acquit us from the greatest imprudence, if we should neglect to take care of that better and more lasting part of ourselves, and to provide for that duration which shall never have an end.

And therefore, if the supposition of the soul's immortality be infinitely more probable, as better agreeing with all the notions which men have of God and his providence, and with the natural desires, and hopes, and fears of mankind, and as most suitable to all our capacities and expectations, and to the general opinion and consent of wise men in all ages; then it is infinitely more safe, and consequently more wise, to proceed upon this supposition, and to provide and act accordingly.

Thus to *number our days*, that is, to make such an account of the shortness and uncertainty of this life, as to employ it mainly in the care and preparation for a better life, will engage us effectually in the business of Religion. And this, perhaps, is the meaning of this phrase in the text, of *applying our hearts to wisdom*, according to that of Job, Job xxviii. 28. *But unto man be said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*; as if he had said, this is the true wisdom, the great excellency and perfection of human nature is religion, the lively sense and firm belief of a Deity, and a carriage and demeanour suitable to that belief; and that man is well taught, and rightly instructed in the great business and concernment of this life, and makes a wise reckoning and account of the shortness and uncertainty of it, who applies himself to the business of religion: for this is the fundamental principle of wisdom, by which our whole life, and all the actions of it, ought to be governed and conducted.

So that if we have immortal spirits, which shall live and continue for ever; we cannot in reason but take our whole life, and our whole duration into consideration. And if we do so, we can never justify it to ourselves, to employ all our care and time about the worst and more ignoble part of ourselves, and to make provision only for the few days of our pilgrimage here in this world, without any regard to that eternal duration, which we shall have in another world.

The serious consideration of this cannot fail to make us careful of our souls, and concerned for eternity; and in order to the securing the happiness of that state, to mind us to *work out our salvation* with great care and diligence; that if it be possible, we may avoid the misery, and obtain the happiness of another world; because there is no comparison between the goods and evils of this life, and those of the other, neither in respect of the degree, nor of the duration of them. And therefore it must needs be great wisdom, to forego the good things of this life, to obtain those of the other; and to bear the evils and afflictions of this life, to escape those of the other. For what man in his wits, for a temporal convenience and satisfaction, would forfeit an eternal benefit and advantage; and to escape a present evil, which cannot last long, would run himself upon one infinitely greater, and which will last for ever?

Consider then, and shew yourselves men. Can there be a greater oversight and miscarriage in the conduct of our affairs, than to mind that least which concerns us most? Is it possible for men to run into a greater mistake than to think, that their great business in this world, is to mind the things of this world? And yet the greatest part of mankind not only run into this mistake at their first setting out, but persist in it all their days; as if their great, and indeed their only concernment were to please themselves for the present, and to provide for this world, as if they were to live always in it: forgetting all this while, that they have immortal souls, which shall survive their bodies, and after a time be re-united to them, to live for ever, deprived of that happiness which they would take no care to secure, and undergoing that misery and punishment which they would be at no pains to prevent whilst they were in this world, and the opportunity of securing the one, and avoiding the other, was in their hands.

II. The thoughts of our latter end should make us very serious and composed in our spirits. For if we have immortal souls as well as dying bodies; if we

shall live for ever, and if the happiness of all eternity depends upon the improvement of this short time of our lives, and our carriage and demeanour while we are here in this world; then it is no trifling business, it is not a matter of small concernment to us how we live here, and manage ourselves during our abode in this world.

Whom do not the lively thoughts of death, and the near approach of it, make grave and serious? and many men much wiser and more considerate than ever they were in any other time of their lives, and much truer judges of things. They can then tell how they ought to have lived, what use they should have made of their time, and what use they would make of it, if God would be pleased to prolong it to them.

The near view of another world is an amazing thing, and apt to inspire men with better thoughts and resolutions than ever they had before. And why should not the clear prospect of it at a distance, and the assured belief of it, have the same effect upon us, to make us serious and to mind in good earnest, *in this our day, the things which belong to our peace, and to wait all the days of our appointed time, 'till our change shall come.*

And therefore, to engage us to a continual seriousness and watchfulness, the great Judge of the world hath hid from us both the time of the general judgment, and of our particular summons out of this world, that we might never be unprovided for the main chance, for that which may happen at any time, and which will concern us for ever.

III. The meditation of our latter end should put us upon minding the great business of our lives with all our might, and make us very vigorous and industrious in it; I mean the business of Religion, and the salvation of our souls. And if we set up this, as in reason we ought, for the great end and design of our lives, and the main scope of all our actions, it will make our lives of a piece, and every part thereof agreeable to itself; because our mind will stand continually bent one way, and all our thoughts, and cares, and endeavours, will be united in one great end and design.

And it will oblige us to great diligence and industry, and make us work hard, to think how great a work we have to do, and how little time to do it in, perhaps much less than most of us do imagine. It is not an easy work for a man to become good, and fit for heaven; it requires time and care, and great watchfulness over our selves, great strugglings, and many a conflict with the evil inclinations of our minds, which, after we have conquered them, will often rally and make head again; a stout resistance of temptations, a stiff and obstinate resolution not to yield to them, and a *patient continuance in well-doing.* The consideration whereof should make us very careful and diligent to get *oil into our lamps;* that is, all those graces and virtues, all those good dispositions which may fit us for another world, and prepare us for eternity; it should make us very vigorous and industrious to do all the good we can, while the opportunity of doing it is in our hands, and to make our selves as good as we can, because this is the time and season of laying the foundation of our future happiness, and increasing the degrees of it; for *as we sow, so shall we reap; he that sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that sows plentifully, shall reap plentifully.* Every degree of virtue and goodness that we attain to in this world, will meet with a suitable reward, and a more resplendent degree of glory and happiness in the next life.

And we shall have this advantage by a great industry and diligence in *working out our own salvation,* that if we have made Religion the great care and business of our lives, we shall have nothing to do when we come to die, but to renew our repentance for the errors and miscarriages of our lives, and to beg God's pardon and forgiveness of them, for the sake of the meritorious obedience and sufferings of our blessed Saviour; to comfort our selves in the goodness and promises of God, and in the glorious hopes of the happiness which we are ready to enter upon; and in the mean time to exercise faith and patience for a very little while, 'till death put an end to the sorrows and miseries of life.

IV. The meditation of our latter end should make us much in the exercise of repentance, and to renew it frequently; because we continually offend God, and
 provoke

provoke him every day, if not by sins of commission, yet of omission and neglect in one kind or other, and by the imperfection of our best actions and services; if not by presumptuous sins and against knowledge, yet by manifold sins of ignorance and infirmity; so that the best of us may say with *David* every day, *who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret sins. If thou shouldest be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who can stand?*

Thus by exercising a daily, or at least a very frequent repentance, we may keep our accounts in a good measure even, and not be in a hurry and confusion when we come to die, neither knowing where to begin our repentance; nor how to go through with so great a work in so short a time, and in circumstances of so much weakness and distraction. There are hardly any of us, especially of us who are ministers, and have frequent occasion to attend upon sick-beds, but have seen several in these wretched circumstances, not knowing what to do, desirous to repent, but what through weakness of body, and horror and confusion of mind, not knowing how to go about it, lamenting their neglect of it in the time of their health, and despairing of doing it now with any success and acceptance. These are sad spectacles indeed, and ought to be loud warnings to us who are in health, and have the opportunity of repentance before us, to make use of it, and to set about this necessary work out of hand, *to-day, whilst it is called to-day, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, and be at last brought into those miserable straits which I have been describing, and which no man that understands himself would be in for all the world.

V. The meditation of the shortness and uncertainty of life should make us great husbands of our time, as that which next to our immortal souls, and for the sake of them, is the most precious and valuable thing in the world.

For as on the one hand, nothing will comfort us more when we come to die and leave this world, than the remembrance of a well-spent life, carefully employed in the service of God, and for the benefit and advantage of men; so on the other hand, there is nothing for which our consciences will more bitterly reproach us at that time, and fly in our faces with greater fury and rage, than for an useless and unprofitable, especially if it have been likewise (as is too commonly seen) a wicked and vicious life.

Our life is uncertain, and therefore we should seize the present time, and improve it to the best advantage, though it be but short in it self, and very short in respect of the great and long work which we have to do in it. To prevent or cure the manifold distempers of our minds, and to preserve our souls in a good state of health, and to keep them free from the disorders of our appetites and passions, requires a wise conduct, and a very careful management of our selves. Evil and inveterate habits are not master'd and mortify'd in an instant; nor the contrary virtues attain'd in any measure of perfection, but by long practice and slow degrees. There must be time, and patience, and perseverance, for the doing of these things, and we must *give all diligence to add to our faith knowledge, and to our knowledge virtue*, and one virtue to another; and one degree of virtue to another; and nothing without this can minister true comfort to us in the hour of death, and make us *to lift up our heads with joy in the day of judgment*.

The consideration of this should make us careful not to neglect any occasion of doing good, or of making our selves better; and restrain us from allowing too much of our time to those great wasters and devourers of it, diversions and visits; because they do not only hinder us from better work and employment, but are apt insensibly to work us off from that serious temper of mind, which becomes those who do in good earnest design for another world.

VI. The meditation of our latter end should make us always to prefer the doing of our duty, and the keeping of a good conscience, to all temporal considerations whatsoever, whether of fame and the good opinion of men, or of wealth and riches, of honour and dignity, of authority and power, *choosing rather, with Moses, to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to have the temporary the enjoyments of sin*.

And as for pleasure, there is little in this world that is true and sincere, besides the pleasure of doing our duty, and of doing good; I am sure none that is comparable to it. A good conscience is *a continual feast*; and he certainly pleaseth

himself best, and is most easy in his own mind, who is conscious to himself, that he endeavours as well as he can to do what he ought.

VII. The meditation of our mortality should teach us the true price and value of all temporal enjoyments, and make us duly affected towards them, and to sit as loose to them in our affections as we can: for nothing surely can be more apt to beget in us a coldness and indifferency towards the enjoyments of this world, than the consideration of the uncertainty of all these things, and of the shortness and uncertainty of our own lives,

Or if we suppose, that they and we both should continue for some number of years, yet there will be an end of them or us; and nothing is to be reckon'd a lasting happiness, that will have an end, tho' it should be long first: for where there can be either sorrow or an end of our joy, there can be no true felicity.

Besides, that the nature of the things of this world is such, that they afford but little happiness to us whilst we have them; we cannot do well without them, and yet we can hardly do well with them. Most of the enjoyments of this world, as desirable as they are to us, are very dangerous, and are always attended with some inconvenience or other; and even when we have all that we can wish for in this world, we are apt to be still uneasy, either something troubles us, or nothing pleases us; we are pained with fulness, and cloyed with the long enjoyment of the best things this world can give us. Why then should we set such an high and unreasonable value upon these temporary enjoyments, and be so much concerned for those things, of which we have so slippery a hold, and so slender an assurance, and which afford us so very little contentment and satisfaction when we have them, and yet give us so much grief and trouble when we lose them? Considering how soon we *must*, and how suddenly we *may* leave this world, and all the enjoyments of it, we ought in reason to set no great price upon them.

VIII. The consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of our lives, should make us contented with our present condition, and patient under all the evils and afflictions which may befall us in this world. A little may content us for a little while, for the short time of our abode here; and since we do not expect our rest and happiness in this world, we cannot think our selves disappointed, if we do not meet with it. If our condition be tolerable, it is well, and we have reason to be contented with it, since it is as much as this world usually affords. If it be very mean and strait, it cannot last long; and even that consideration should silence our murmurings, and should restrain and check our discontent.

And it should make us patient likewise under the greatest evils and afflictions of this present life, to consider that they will shortly have an end; either they will give off of themselves, or they will carry us off and make an end of us, and all the patience we have exercised will be rewarded far beyond the proportion of our sufferings.

At the worst, the afflictions and sufferings of this present time, are not like the troubles and miseries of the other world, they will not last always. The most grievous things that can befall us here, are not like the torments of hell, neither for the degree, nor the duration of them, without intermission and without end.

IX. The meditation of death, and of the consequences of it, should make us upright and sincere in all our words and actions. Hypocrisy and dissimulation, as much as they are practised, are no part of true wisdom, no, not as to this world; they recoil terribly upon men, and turn to their reproach and disadvantage so soon as they are discerned, and they cannot be long practised without being discover'd. But if we regard the other world, all disguises and arts of deceit are perfect folly; because then *God will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*, as Solomon assures us, *Eccles. xii. 14.* And our blessed Saviour cautions us against hypocrisy, upon this consideration, that there is a day coming, when all the false pretences of men shall be exposed and laid open, and all those masks and vizors which men wear in this world will fall off, and the actions of men shall appear in their true colours, *Luke xii. 1, 2.* *Beware*, says our Saviour there first of all, *of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy; for there is nothing cover'd, that shall not be revealed; nor hid, that shall not be known.*

Lastly,

Lastly, The meditation of our latter end should put us upon a careful, and continual, and particular preparation for the time of our death and dissolution. And this is very well worth our while; and the sooner we set about it, the better; because, when this work is in any good measure done, we have rescued our selves from that *bondage*, to which most men are all their life long *subject*, because of the continual *fear of death*. Nothing abates the terror of death, like a due preparation for it. When this is once made, we cannot be much concerned when it comes; for to a well-prepared mind, sooner or later makes no great difference: but if we have delayed this necessary work, the longer we have delayed it, the more unfit we shall be for it, and the more unwilling to set about it; and if necessity drives us to it at last, we shall find that old age and sickness are but bad times to make preparation for death in, to begin our repentance and the change of a bad life. He that prepares not for death, before he draws near to it, and comes to lie upon a sick-bed, is like him that begins to study the art of navigation, when he hath present occasion and use for the skill which he hath not yet learned, when his vessel is driven among rocks, and is every moment in danger of being dash'd in pieces.

Let this then be establish'd for a firm principle and rule, that the best and surest preparation for a happy and comfortable death, is a holy and good life. For nothing will disarm death of its terrors, like the conscience of our own innocency, and of a sincere desire and endeavour to please God in the general course and tenour of our lives, and of a sincere repentance for all the errors and miscarriages of our lives. And though our life be short and uncertain, yet it is a great deal that we may do by way of preparation for another world, if we begin and set out betimes, and be good husbands of the present opportunities. It is a great way that we may go in a short time, if we be always moving and pressing forwards.

But the mischief is, many men pass fifty or sixty years in the world, and when they are just going out of it, they bethink themselves, and step back as it were to do something which they had all this while forgot, *viz.* the main business for which they came into the world, to repent of their sins and reform their lives, and make their peace with God, and in time to prepare for eternity. This, which is forgotten and defer'd to the last, ought to have been first thought of, and to have been made the great business of their whole lives.

But I proceed to give some more particular directions concerning our preparation for death; namely,

1. By frequent meditation of it, which will render it more familiar to us, and help us to tame this monster, and to take off the dread of it; and therefore we should accustom our selves to the thoughts of it, that we may in some measure be reconciled to it.

2. We should endeavour to mitigate the evil and terror of death, by thinking of something worse, I mean the evils and miseries of life. For when we once come to look upon death as a remedy of all the evils of life, we shall then begin to be reconciled to it; and if we be wise, shall be glad to be out of the noise, and danger, and suffering of so many evils as we are continually liable to in this world; and shall thank God heartily for dismissing us, and giving us leave to die, and by death to put an end to this miserable life, and to begin a better and happier life, which shall never have an end.

And we should likewise meditate much on the glory and happiness of another world. For if we be once possess'd with a firm belief and persuasion of it, we shall think the time long that we are detained from it, and wish for that which we so much feared, I mean death, that it may bring us to the enjoyment of that which we have much more reason to desire.

And indeed, considering (as I said before) the many evils and miseries which we are liable to and always in danger of, while we are in this world, we have cause to thank God that we were born to die, and that we are not condemned to live for ever in this world. So that whenever God shall think fit to release us, we ought to esteem it a favour: but if he will have us to stay a little longer, we must with patience wait for another opportunity of making our escape out of an evil and troublesome world. But methinks we should not much desire to ride it out in the storm any longer, when the port is open, and we may safely enter in. And then,

3. By way of farther preparation for death, we should endeavour to maintain always a lively sense of it in our minds, that we may be, to all good effects and purposes, as much under the power of it, as if it were just approaching, as if the physician or the judge had pass'd the sentence of death upon us. We should always reckon upon that which may happen the next moment; and if we do so, we can never be extremely surprized; but *whenever our Lord comes, shall be found watching.* And,

Lastly, We should make it our constant prayer to God, that he would fit us for our dissolution, and stand by us and comfort us in that needful time, without whose gracious support and assistance, both physicians, and even the ministers of God themselves, are but *miserable comforters*. It should be our daily petition to God, that he would enable us to perform this last act of our life with decency and constancy of mind, that neither our disease nor our weakness may break the firmness of our spirits, or leave us to be amazed with fear, or betrayed with peevishness; so as to render us uneasy to ourselves, or to make our friends willing to be rid of us.

But more especially, when God thinks fit, either by the nature or present danger of our distemper, to give us a nearer summons and clearer warning of our mortality, we should take the opportunity to impress upon our minds a deep and more lively sense of another world, that we may quicken our pace, and *work the work of him that sent us into the world, while it is day; because the night is coming when no man can work.*

Nature I know is fond of life, and apt to be still longing after a longer continuance here, and to find many delays and excuses to tarry yet a while longer in this world: and yet a very long life, with the usual burdens and infirmities of it, is seldom in reason desirable; for it is but the same thing over again, or worse; so many more days and nights, summers and winters, a repetition of the same pleasures, but still with less pleasure and relish; a return of the same or greater pains and troubles, but still with less patience and strength to bear them.

Let us then be of good courage in the approaches of death, since we see land, and the storm which we are in will quickly be over; and then it will be as if it had never been, or rather the remembrance of it will be a great pleasure to us.

*Suave mari magno, turbantibus æquora ventis,
E terrâ alterius magnum spectare periculum.
Non quia vexari quendam est jucunda voluptas;
Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.*

“ It is a pleasant thing to stand upon the shore, when we see others in a great storm at sea. Not that it is delightful to see others in danger; but when others are in great difficulties and dangers, it is a pleasure to find ourselves safe and out of danger.”

And if it should please God to exercise us with great pains and tedious sickness, we should make use of all the considerations which reason and religion do furnish us withall, to help to mitigate and deceive our troubles, and to make that short way a little more smooth and easy. For the best of us have no privilege and exemption from the common accidents of humanity, no piety can certainly secure to any of us an easy and comfortable death; and therefore it is a groundless confidence for any man to reckon upon it; we must in this, as in all other things, resign up our selves to God's good pleasure, and submit to him the time and manner, and all other circumstances of our departure out of this world; whether our sun shall set in a cloud, or shine brightest and look biggest when it is going down. But however it sets, it is the sun still, and the fountain of light, and will rise gloriously. There are always the seeds of joy and comfort in the conscience of a good man; and tho' they be hid and buried for a while, they will spring forth one time or other. *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart,* as David assures us, *Psal xcvi. 11.* I will conclude all with the words of the author of this Psalm, *Deut. xxxii. 29.* *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.*

SERMON

SERMON CXXXV.

The Life of Jesus Christ consider'd, as our Example.

I PET. II. 21.

-----*Leaving us an Example, that ye should follow his steps.*

*The First
Sermon on
this Text.*

THE Apostle here propounds to christians the example of our Saviour, as an argument to persuade them to one particular grace and virtue, namely, patience under sufferings unjustly laid upon us, Ver. 19, 20, 21. *For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffetted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps.*

But though the example of our Saviour be here propounded to us upon a particular occasion, and with a more especial regard to the particular virtue of patience under unjust sufferings, which did so eminently appear in our blessed Saviour, the most meek and patient endurer that ever was, of the greatest and most wrongful sufferings; yet the Apostle does not limit this great pattern of all righteousness to the single virtue of patience, but propounds it to us, as an example of universal holiness and goodness; for so he extends it in the next words, *leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*

In this latitude and extent I shall discourse of it at this time, and that under these following heads;

- I. That his life is a most absolute and perfect pattern.
- II. That it is a very easy and familiar example.
- III. Very encouraging to the imitation of it.
- IV. An universal pattern fitted for the imitation of all sorts of persons, of what rank or condition soever.
- V. In the nature of it, very powerful to engage and oblige men to the imitation of it.

I. The life of our blessed Saviour is a most absolute and perfect pattern of holiness and goodness, compleat and entire in all its parts, and perfect to the utmost degree, in the following whereof there is no danger of being misguided, no fear of miscarriage: whereas all other examples of mortal men are fallible and uncertain guides, which if we follow too closely, will some time or other mis-lead us. In the lives of the best men recorded in scripture, we may discern some spot and blemish, some error and oversight, some fall or slip; so that the lives of the holiest men are no sure rule, no perfect measure of our duty, and are therefore to be imitated with great wisdom and wariness, lest if we follow all their actions indifferently and implicitly, in confidence they are good, because they are theirs, we may fall into great errors and failings; and therefore in following the lives and examples of the best men, we must have an eye to the rule, and by *that* judge of the example which we propose to imitate; otherwise we may easily be seduced by the authority of a great example.

But the example of our Lord is a *living law and rule*, his precepts and his pattern are of equal perfection, and the imitation of his life and actions is the very same thing with obedience to his laws. For the life of our blessed Saviour here on earth, is the life of God in the nature and likeness of man; he was God as well as man, and the divine nature is certainly the pattern of all perfection. As he was the son of God, he was *the brightness of his father's*
glory,

glory, and the express image and character of his person; and as he was the son of man, tho' he had natural frailties and infirmities, and was subject to hunger and thirst, weariness and pain, like other men; yet he had all the moral perfections belonging to human nature, without any of the evil inclinations, and sinful frailties to which it is incident; and his human nature was assisted in an extraordinary manner by the spirit of God, which was not communicated to him by measure, but he was anointed with that holy unction above his fellows, above all the sons of men, above all the prophets and messengers of God that ever were sent to mankind; he had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. And indeed it was requisite, that he that was manifested to take away our sins, and to make expiation for them, should himself be without sin, as the Apostle to the Hebrews reasons, Heb. vii. 26. *Such an high-priest became us, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners*: and had he not been so, he could neither have been an example, nor an expiation.

And this is no small advantage to mankind, to have so excellent a pattern of the same nature with ourselves to imitate, so perfect a copy to write after. For whoever would excel in any kind, must (as Quintilian says) *optima quæque exempla ad imitandum proponere, propose to himself the highest and most perfect examples of that kind for his imitation*; and the example of our blessed Saviour is unquestionably such a perfect pattern of all goodness and virtue, to the perfection whereof tho' we can never attain, yet it is a great advantage to have it always before us, and in our eye, that we may correct the errors and deformities of our lives, by the unspotted purity, and perfect innocency of his life, and that we may be always aspiring after farther degrees of goodness; for surely we can no way better learn how God would have men to live in this world, than by seeing how God himself lived, when he was pleased to become man, to assume our nature, and dwell among us.

II. As the life of our blessed Saviour is a most perfect, so likewise it is a familiar and easy example. The divine nature is the great pattern of perfection; but that is too remote from us, and above our sight; *no man hath seen God at any time, nor can see him*; and tho' his perfections are represented to our minds in some degree, yet they are so glorious and dazzling an object, that we cannot bear to behold them with that steadfastness, with which we ought to eye our pattern; and therefore God hath been pleased to condescend so far to our weakness, as to give us a visible example of those virtues he requires of us in *his own son, appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh*: and the son of God is an example of equal perfection with God himself, but much more easy and familiar, and level to us, in which we may see the several virtues of a good life practised in such instances, and upon such occasions, as do frequently happen in human life.

Nothing was ever more simple and open, more obvious and easy to common imitation, than the life of our blessed Saviour, in which there was nothing dark and mysterious, abstruse and intricate; it was all perfect innocency and goodness, and he carried on one plain, and intelligible, and uniform design, which was to do all the good he possibly could to all men: this he pursued with all his might, with the greatest vigour and industry, with an undaunted courage and resolution, with an unwearied diligence, with a constant cheerfulness and serenity of mind; this was *his meat and drink*, his great business and delight, his life and his happiness; he was not superciliously morose, had no affected singularities, no peculiar austerities in habit or diet, different from the common usage of men; his conversation was kind and innocent, free and familiar, open and indifferent to all sorts of persons; for he was a physician, and every body had need of him, all mankind were his patients. He did not place religion (as some have done since) in retirement from the world, and shunning the conversation of men, and taking great care to do no body good: not in profound mysteries and fine speculations, but in the plain and honest practice of the solid and substantial virtues of a good life; in meekness and humility, in kindness and charity, in contentedness in a low and mean condition, and a calm composure of mind under all accidents and events, in patience under the greatest reproaches and sufferings, and a perfect submission to the will of God in all his dispensations, how harsh and unpleasant soever.

Now

Now there is nothing in all this, but what lies open to every man's understanding, and is easy to our practice and imitation, requiring nothing but an honest mind, and due care and diligence to do what we may easily know, to follow our guide in a plain way, and in all the actions of our lives, to tread in those steps in which the son of God, and the best man that ever was, hath gone before us.

III. The life of our blessed Saviour is likewise an encouraging example. It cannot but give great life to all good resolutions and endeavours, to see all that which God requires of us performed by one in our nature, by a man like ourselves. Our Saviour indeed had many advantages above us, being God as well as man; and his humanity, being supported by the divine nature to which it was united, being clear from all the ill effects of original sin, and from all kind of vicious and inordinate inclinations: but then it is a great encouragement to us, to consider that God doth not require at our hands a perfect and unfinning obedience, as the condition of our salvation and happiness; but only such an obedience to his laws, as is sincere, and continually aspiring after greater perfection, which is very possible to us by the grace of Christ, even in this imperfect state; that God considers our weakness, and how much we stand in need of his grace and assistance, and hath assured us that it shall not be wanting to us, if we heartily and earnestly beg it of him; and that strength which we may have for asking, is as good as if it were our own. If Christ were the son of God; so are we in a lower degree, by grace and adoption; and *if we be the sons of God, the spirit of God dwells in us*, to quicken and raise us to newness of life. And he that hath left us such an example, on purpose that we might follow it, will not surely leave us destitute of power to enable us to do so. It is a good argument to us, that he will enable us to do that in some degree in our own persons, which he himself did for our example in our nature.

An example more suitable to our weakness, might seem to have had more of encouragement in it: but we are to consider, that the son of God assumed our nature, as compass'd with infirmities, and liable to be *tempted in all things, as we are, only without sin*; so that his example could not possibly have come nearer to us than it does, without great disadvantage to us, without wanting that perfection which is necessary to a compleat and absolute pattern. In short, the spirit of Christ dwells in us; and the same spirit which kept and preserved him from all sin, is equally able to mortify sin in us, and to enable us to do the will of God in such manner as he will accept to our justification.

IV. It is an universal pattern. As the doctrine of our Saviour, so his example was of an universal nature and design, calculated for all times and places, and, as much as was possible, abstracted from the circumstances of a particular condition, that it might be the more equally suited to all callings, and conditions, and capacities of men, and fitted for general direction and imitation in all sorts of goodness and virtue, either in the general principle, or in the particular instances of them. And for this reason he would not engage himself in any particular calling, or way of life, that his pattern might more equally and indifferently regard all mankind.

He was really a great person, the greatest that ever was in birth and dignity, being the only son of God, the maker and heir of all things: and yet he submitted to the lowest condition, to all the degrees of poverty and meanness, of contempt and sufferings, to teach men of high degree to be humble and serviceable to the good of others; and men of low degree to be contented and cheerful in the meanest condition, and the hardest circumstances that the providence of God shall see good to place them in.

He had the deepest and most comprehensive knowledge; *in him*, as the Apostle expresseth it, *were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*: and yet he made no vain show and ostentation of it; he did not puzzle his hearers with abstruse speculations and sublime mysteries, but in a way of plain and familiar instruction, declar'd to his hearers those things which were most useful and necessary for them to know. He confuted the doctors, and confounded the wisdom of the wise, those who were conceited of their own knowledge and skill in divine things; but was always ready to condescend to the weakness and ignorance

norance of the meanest capacity; giving herein an example to the wise and learned, not to make a show of their knowledge, but to make the best use of it; not to lift up themselves above others, but to condescend and stoop to them for their good.

He sometimes retir'd from conversation and company, that he might be alone, and at leisure to attend upon God, and meditate on divine and heavenly things, without interruption and distraction; but most frequently he convers'd with others, and mingled himself with all sorts of persons that he might give all the advantage, and do all the good he could to all men. Nay, he did not decline the conversation of the worst of men, and it was really true which was objected to him, that *he was a friend of publicans and sinners*, being sincerely desirous to do them the greatest kindness in the world, to reform their manners, and reclaim them to a better course; so that he was a pattern both of the contemplative and active life, and shews us how to mix these to the greatest advantage; and by his own example teacheth us, that we cannot serve God better than by doing good to men; and that he is as well pleased, when we lay out ourselves for the benefit of others spiritual and temporal, as if we employed all our thoughts and meditations wholly upon himself and divine things; that a perpetual retirement from the world, and shunning the conversation of men, is not the most religious life, but living among men, and doing good to them.

More particularly, the life of our blessed Saviour is a pattern to us,

1. Of the greatest and most substantial virtues.
2. Of the most rare and unusual.
3. Of the most useful and beneficial.
4. Of the most hard and difficult: and,
5. Of such virtues as are most needful; and for the practice of which, there is the greatest and most frequent occasion in human life.

1. It is a pattern of the greatest, and most substantial virtues.

Of a fervent piety and devotion toward God. We read, that he often retir'd to pray, and sometimes spent whole nights in it: his mind was continually upon God, as appears by his frequent ejaculations upon all occasions, by his communication and discourse, which was always either instructive of men in divine truths, or persuasive to a holy practice; from worldly objects and occurrences, he would take occasion to raise some spiritual meditation, and to speak of heavenly things.

And then his ready and chearful obedience to the will of God in all things: *in the volume of the book it is written of me, I come to do thy will, O my God.* He speaks of it with pleasure; and *he delighted to do it*; he declined the will of God in no instance, how difficult and displeasing soever to flesh and blood.

The perfect purity and innocency of his life: *he was a lamb without spot and blemish*, 1 Pet. i. 19. *He did no sin*. Chap. ii. 21. *Leaving us herein an example*, that tho' we cannot keep equal pace with him, yet *we should follow his steps*. *He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*, Heb. vii. 27.

And then his universal charity, taking all opportunities to do all the good, temporal and spiritual, that he could to all men, of which his whole life is one great and continued instance: these are all great and substantial virtues.

I have indeed said nothing of justice, both because there was little occasion for it, he having nothing to do in those matters wherein justice is concerned. He had no estate of his own, and he meddled not with those of other mens: and likewise because his life was all goodness, which is a virtue of a higher pitch than justice: he that was so good to all, we need not doubt of his justice, if there had been occasion for it.

2. He was a pattern of the most rare and unusual virtues.

Such was his sincerity; *guile was not found in his mouth*, 1 Pet. ii. 22. His conversation was free and open, without disguise and concealment; and therefore when the high priest asked him of his disciples, and of his doctrine, *John xviii. 19.* he wonder'd at the question: *why askest thou me? Ask them that heard me. I spake openly to the world, I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the Temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing.* And this is no common virtue, and therefore our Saviour gave it as a singular commendation

to

to Nathanael, John i. 47. *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.* Perfect sincerity is a great foundation of goodness; it is soundness at the heart, and, like perfect health, seldom to be seen; there is hardly any thing wherein men; otherwise good and virtuous, do oftner trip and falter.

Another virtue, which is not very usual, was eminent in our Saviour, I mean true humility, without affectation and secret pride lurking under it. This appeared very remarkable, and very natural in his whole life, which was all of it the greatest instance of humility that ever was; and therefore with great assurance he propounds himself to our imitation in this, *Matth. xi. 29. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in spirit.* And St. Paul sets this virtue before us, as being the constant temper of our Lord, and visible in his whole undertaking, and in every part of it from first to last, from his coming into the world, to his going out of it, *Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation (he emptied himself of all his majesty and glory) and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* Here was humility indeed, from so great a height to stoop so low, from the top of glory and majesty, to the lowest pitch of meanness and misery. Here's a pattern for us; and how should it shame and confound the pride of the sons of men, to see the Son of God so humble? There is no virtue I am sure which we have so much reason, and yet none which we have so little inclination, to imitate. *Pride was not made for men,* says the son of *Syrach*; it does not become us, and yet it is the fashion; we know that we have no cause to be proud, and yet we know not how to be humble. Let the example of our Lord's humility bring down the haughtiness of men, and when we consider how he abased himself, let us be *vile in our own eyes, and abhor ourselves in dust and ashes.*

And then his contempt of the world, and the enjoyments and pleasures of it to that degree, that he would have no part and share in the possessions of it, not so much as one of the first and almost lowest conveniencies of life, a settled abode and habitation; so that, as he himself tells us, he was in a more destitute condition than the brute creatures: *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.* Not that he designed to oblige us to a strict imitation of him in this particular; for he might, and we may lawfully possess and enjoy these things: but to teach us not to overprize them, not to seek them too earnestly, nor love them inordinately. That he despised them, should keep us from admiring them, and doating upon them; that he would not have them in his possession, should keep them out of our hearts, and make us very loose and indifferent in our affections to them; that he valued doing good above all the enjoyments of this world, should make us value them only in order to that end.

And then his excessive kindness and benignity to us, such as men very rarely shew to their best friends, and the best men; but such as no man ever shewed to his enemies: *Peradventure for a good man one would even dare to die,* says St. Paul, *Rom. v. 7. But herein God commended his love to us, in that whilst we were sinners, Christ died for us.* And this pattern of love our Saviour propounds to our imitation, *John xv. 12, 13. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend.* The highest pitch of human friendship that ever was, was to die for a friend: but our Lord died not for his friends, but for his enemies, that he might make them his friends, by gaining them to the obedience of his laws: *Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you.* The same pattern the Apostles of our Lord propound to us, *Eph. v. 2. Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us.* 1 John iii. 16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* Here is a pattern of the highest and most unusual kind of love proposed to our imitation; not that every man, by virtue of this example, is to lay down his life for another, because that is not practicable; for then by the same reason that I am obliged to lay down my life for another, he would be as much

obliged to lay down his life for me; and so by my dying for him, I should hinder him of doing a duty to which he was equally obliged, and take it out of his hands: but the meaning of this precept is, that as Christ died for a common good, so we ought to bear that common affection to mankind, and especially to our brethren, who are endeared to us by a nearer relation, as in imitation of the example he hath given us, to be ready by our single life, if there be occasion, to redeem the lives of many of our brethren, and to expose ourselves to save them. This I conceive is all that can reasonably be collected from our obligation to imitate our Lord's example.

3. The life of our blessed Saviour is likewise a pattern of such virtues, as are most useful and beneficial to others.

In his readiness to do good to all persons and all kinds; by instructing their ignorance, and supplying their wants, spiritual and temporal; by resolving their doubts, and comforting them in their sorrows; by healing their diseases and infirmities, which he indeed did in extraordinary and miraculous ways, because he was destitute of ordinary means; and we are to do it by ordinary means, and such as are in our power, which when they are, there is no need of miracles. And then in his seeking occasions and opportunities for it, not content with those that offered themselves, but enquiring after them; and in his unwearied diligence in this work; for *he went about doing good*, spent whole days from morning to night, for the service and benefit of others; neglected himself, and the ordinary refreshments of nature, out of his great zeal *to work the work of him that sent him*, to bring glory to God, and good to men.

And in the delight he took in this employment; it was *his meat and drink* to be doing of it: he esteemed it his happiness, yea, a greater felicity to confer benefits upon others, than any man finds in receiving the greatest benefit from others: for that it seems was a noted saying of his, a kind of motto with him, as St. Paul testifies, *Acts xx. 35. It is more blessed to give than to receive.* And in all this, he persisted in despite of the greatest discouragements from the ingratitude and malice of men, who maligned him for his kindness, and put an ill construction upon his most charitable actions, and were ready *to stone him for his good works*: but this did not discourage him, and take him off; so he might do good, he was contented to hear and suffer ill.

And then in his condescension to others, and consideration of their weakness, and complying with them in lawful and indifferent things, for their edification, and to gain them in greater matters; this St. Paul tells us, was our Lord's temper, and he urgeth Christians with the example of it, *Rom. xv. 1, 2, 3. We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not himself.* Where we have liberty and can yield, we ought to abate of our own humour, for the good and edification of others; and not peevishly and stiffly to insist upon lesser things, to the hindrance of a greater good; *for even Christ pleased not himself.* He who had all authority to command, and right to be obeyed, and who could not err in any thing; yet he condescended to the weakness and infirmities of others, and in all indifferent things, did not consult his own inclination, but their interest and edification.

And, which greatly conduceth to the comfort and benefit of all societies, both civil and ecclesiastical, he gave us the example of an obedient and peaceable temper, conforming himself and his actions not only to divine, but human laws, *Giving to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's*; insomuch, that when tribute was demanded of him, tho' he was really free from any such obligation, and so poor, that he was not able to pay it, in which case even *Cæsar* must lose his right; nevertheless, to avoid offence, he submitted to it, and chose rather to work a miracle, than to appear refractory and disobedient.

And in religious rites and ceremonies, and the observance of days and times, he did not only conform to all divine institutions, but to human appointment and usage in all things that were of an innocent and indifferent nature; and this without any anxious scrupulosity, and perverse disputing every inch of his liberty; with great peaceableness observing those religious festivals, which had

no other appointment but of the civil authority, and were of mere human institution; and with great prudence steering a middle course between endless superstition, and scrupulous and petulant faction; giving all Christians herein a pattern, how to demean themselves in like cases with great peaceableness and obedience, and not to do or avoid the doing of any thing, out of peevishness and singularity of humour, and a spirit of contradiction, and not to indulge needless and endless scruples, especially on the wrong side, as it is too visible many mens scruples lie almost wholly about obedience to authority, and compliance with indifferent customs, but very seldom about the danger of disobedience and unpeaceableness, and rending in pieces the church of Christ by needless separations, and endless divisions.

And our Lord did not only give us the example of a peaceable and uniting spirit, but a little before his departure out of the world, he bequeathes it to his disciples, as his last legacy, *John xiv. 27. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.* And to confirm it to them, he makes it his most earnest and particular prayer to God for them, that God would preserve this spirit of peace and unity among Christians to the end of the world, foreseeing in his infinite wisdom, what mischiefs and dishonour the contrary temper would bring to his holy religion, *John xvii. 20, 21, 22, 23. Neither pray I for these alone, meaning his disciples, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that is, for all Christians to the end of the world; that they all may be one, as thou father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me.* Intimating, that nothing is more apt to bring in question the divinity of the christian doctrine, than contentions and divisions among Christians, *that the world may know that thou hast sent me.*

Let us often think of this pattern, and this prayer of our Saviour, and let the consideration of it quell those unchristian heats which are among us, left by our animosities and divisions about lesser things, which, whatever opinion men may have of them, do no ways touch upon the life and essence of religion, we first dishonour, and finally destroy from among us the best religion in the world. *And God grant that we may all know and do in this our day, the things which belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes, for his mercies sake in Jesus Christ; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory now and ever.*

S E R M O N CXXXVI.

The Life of Jesus Christ consider'd, as our Example.

I P E T. II. 21.

-----*Leaving us an Example, that ye should follow his steps.*

*The Second
Sermon on
this Text.*

I Have considered our Saviour's example as an universal pattern, calculated for all persons, times and places; and this I illustrated in these particulars:

1. That it was a pattern to us of the greatest and most substantial virtues.
2. Of such as are most rare and unusual.
3. Of such as are most useful and beneficial to others: I proceed to the particulars, which remain to be spoken to.

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4. Our

4. Our Saviour is likewise a pattern to us of such virtues as are most hard and difficult to be practised, such as are most against the grain of our corrupt nature, and most contrary to flesh and blood.

Every virtue is then hard and difficult, when it either contradicts the strong inclinations of nature, or meets with powerful temptations to the contrary.

The virtues which thwart the inclinations of human nature, are comprehended under the general name of self-denial; the denial of ourselves in those things which are commonly dearest to men; such are our own life, our pleasure or ease, our reputation; in all these, our blessed Lord hath given us the greatest example of self-denial that ever was; he denied his own life, and gave up himself wholly to the will of God, to do and suffer whatever he thought fit to impose upon him. So he himself tells us, *John v. 30. I seek not mine own will, but the will of the father which sent me:* And *John vi. 38. I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.* And when he was in that great agony, upon the apprehension of his approaching sufferings, at which nature did start, and when that *bitter cup*, that *cup of astonishment* was put into his hand, though he would have been glad to have declin'd it, if God had thought fit; yet upon the whole matter, he submitted to it, and renounced his own will, the strongest inclination of nature that could be, in obedience to the will of God. *Matth. xxvi. 39. He fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt:* And *ver. 42. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.* Here was a great conflict; nature declined those dreadful sufferings which were coming upon him, and would have shrunk back: but he consider'd his duty, and made his inclination yield to it.

And he did not only deny his own will in obedience to the will of God, for which there is so great and invincible reason; but he denied it likewise in compliance and condescension to the prejudices, and humours and infirmities of men, for their *edification and good*. So St. Paul tells us, and propounds our Lord herein to us for a pattern. *Rom. xv. 2, 3.*

He denied himself in the lawful pleasures and satisfactions, in the ease and accommodations of life: he lived meanly, and fared hardly; he possess'd and enjoyed none of the good things of this world, and endured all the evils of it; he despised riches, and the pomp and pride of life, and contented himself with a poor and destitute condition, *having not where to lay his head*, nor wherewithall to support nature, and to defray the common tribute, without a miracle. And he did not submit to this poor and mean condition upon necessity, for *he was Lord of all*; he made the world, and it was all his own, upon the highest right and title: but he voluntarily embraced it, *being rich, for our sake he became poor*, that he might wean us from the love of these things, and be an effectual example to us of the contempt of worldly wealth and greatness.

And he denied himself likewise in one of the dearest and tenderest things in the world, to the wisest and greatest minds, I mean in point of reputation: *he made himself of no reputation*, says St. Paul, *Phil. ii. 7. εαυτὸν ἐκένωσε, he emptied himself.* To submit to contempt, is to empty one's self indeed: reputation being one of the last things a generous mind would be content to forego, and that which some have held in equal dearth and esteem with life itself; yet in this our Lord denied himself, and that he might do good to mankind, was contented to be esteemed one of the worst of men; and without any kind of cause and desert, to undergo all manner of obloquy and reproach, to be accounted a magician, and impostor, a friend and companion of publicans and sinners; a seducer of the people, a seditious person, and more worthy of the most cruel and shameful death than the greatest malefactor. Thus was the Son of God contented to be set below the worst of men, to be abased and vilified, that he might be a perfect pattern to us of this difficult virtue of self-denial, even in those things which are held in greatest esteem among the best of men.

And surely in no case is example more necessary than in this, to animate and encourage us in the discharge of so difficult a duty, so contrary to the bent and inclination of our nature. A bare precept of self-denial in these things, and a peremp-

peremptory command to sacrifice our own wills, our ease, our pleasure and reputation, yea and life itself to the glory of God, and the good of men, would have sound'd very harsh and severe, had not the practice of all this been exemplified in a pattern of so much advantage: one who in all these respects denied himself much more than is possible for us to do, who might have insisted upon a greater right, who abas'd himself, and stoop'd from a greater height and dignity, who did not submit to a condition of poverty and meanness when it was unavoidable, but chose it; who submitted to suffering, though he never deserved it, and who met with all the contempt and reproach imaginable, whilst he truly deserved the greatest esteem and reputation. Here is an example that hath all the argument, and all the encouragement that can be to the imitation of it. Was he, who had so regular a will and inclination, contented to have it crucified and thwarted? Did he, who had an unquestionable right to all the riches and enjoyments of the world, renounce them all; and embrace poverty? Did he, to whose deep wisdom and judgment all mankind ought to submit, condescend to the weakness of others, and *not please himself*? Did he, who never did the least thing in his whole life that might justly stain or blemish his reputation, patiently bear all sorts of contumely and reproach? And shall we think much to deny ourselves in any of these? Such an example is of greater force and authority than any precept or law. Well might our Lord, thus going before us, command us to follow him, saying, *If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* If he thus denied himself, well may we, who have much less to deny, and much more reason and cause to do it; for, as he argues, *the disciple is not greater than his master, nor the servant than his lord.* He did it voluntarily and of choice; it is our duty: he did it for our sakes; we do it for our own: we did not deserve it of him; but he hath merited it of us.

Our Lord did not, like the *Pharisees*, give strict precepts to others, which they themselves did not follow. *They said, and did not; laid heavy burdens upon others, and grievous to be borne, when they themselves would not touch them with one of their fingers:* nor like the philosophers, who spake fine and glorious things of goodness and virtue, but did much like other men; gave strict rules to others, but lived loosely themselves; and therefore it is no wonder that their discourses had so little effect upon the lives and manners of men, and were so unavailable to the reformation of the world. Precepts of great strictness and severity, are like to be obeyed very slowly and faintly, unless they be sweetned and made easy by the familiar practice of those that give them. In a way that is rugged and difficult, full of trouble and danger, it is not enough to bid men go on; but he that bids them, must go before them, and take them by the hand, and give them an example to follow his steps; without this, rules and precepts are very dry things, and give but faint and cold encouragement. *Cæsar's* example prevail'd much more upon his soldiers, than his word of command. No man ever discours'd better of magnanimity and greatness of mind, in great dangers and calamities, than *Tully* does; and yet when it come to the tryal, no man ever behaved himself more faintly, and shewed greater dejection of mind, than he did; so that it is hard to say, whether his discourses are more apt to raise, or his example to damp a man's spirit. *Seneca* writes with wonderful wit and smartness, with great fineness and force of argument, about the contempt of the world and wealth; but then to consider how he flow'd in wealth himself, and how intent he was to heap up riches beyond measure, would make a man more apt to despise him, than the world. So necessary is it that precepts, especially of great difficulty, should be back'd and enforc'd by example, and that severe rules should be mollified, and made easy by the practice of those who prescribe them. And this our Lord took particular care to do in those precepts of his, which seem to offer the greatest violence to the common bent and inclination of human nature.

And so he did likewise in those virtues which are so difficult upon the account of temptation from without, as well as of inclination from within. Not to insist upon his firm resistance of all the temptations to ambition, which made not the least impression upon him; the offer of *the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*, had no influence upon him. He was sometimes in great favour
with

with the people, and mightily applauded by them, for *speaking as never man spake*, and doing such things, as no man ever did: but he was as little moved by their applause, as he was dejected by their reproaches. When the people would have made him *King*, to qualify him the better, as they thought, to be the *Messias*, he would not take so much notice of the offer, as to refuse it, but silently withdrew himself, that they knew not where to find him.

But that which I shall particularly take notice of under this head, is his great meekness; which is a very difficult virtue, if we consider the peevishness and infirmity of human nature, and the frequent temptations to passion and anger, which occur in human life, and these very sudden and surprizing; so that there is nothing wherein wise men do oftner betray their own weakness, than in the matter of sudden anger. *Moses*, the greatest of all the Prophets that had been, and who it seems was naturally of a meek temper, having this testimony given him by the Spirit of God, that *he was the meekest man upon earth*; yet he miscarried in this matter, and not being able to bear the continual perverseness of that people, lost his temper, and fell into an irregular passion. But our blessed Lord, whose temper was perpetually assaulted with the highest provocations in all kinds, still maintained the evenness and meekness of his spirit.

The dulness and slowness of his disciples, to understand and believe what he had so plainly taught, and so often inculcated upon them, was a great tryal of patience; which yet provok'd him no farther, than to a just rebuke of their fault. The hardest words he ever gave them, were, *O unwise and slow of heart to believe! how long shall I suffer you?* And when he was in the height of his sorrow and trouble, and his disciples were so unconcern'd for him, as to fall asleep, in the same breath that he reproves their drowsiness, he makes an excuse for it: *Can ye not watch with me one hour? The spirit indeed is willing: but the flesh is weak.* This carriage from his friends and followers, when he stood in most need of their comfort and assistance, and *his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even to the death*, was a great temptation to anger, especially falling upon a sore and afflicted mind; and yet it was so far from provoking his anger, that it rather moved his pity toward them.

His sharp reproofs of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, were but a necessary severity, and a just expression of his indignation at the fulsome hypocrisy of such great pretenders to piety and devotion; for *he knew their hearts*. His whipping of the buyers and sellers out of the temple, the only action of his life in which there appears any transport of anger, was no other than a becoming zeal for the honour of God's house, which he saw so notoriously profaned; which zeal was warranted, after the example of *Phineas*, by the extraordinary occasion of it. In all his other actions, he was perfectly meek and lowly in spirit, void of pride, one of the chief causes of inordinate anger. We cannot say he was never angry; but whenever he was so, which was very seldom, *he sinned not*; it was upon great and just occasion, and never to any undue degree.

And this is the more remarkable, because he was very apt to receive the impressions of other passions; of love and pity, which easily moved him to kindness and compassion. He could not forbear to weep, when he saw *Lazarus* his friends lamenting over his grave, though he knew the cause of their sorrow would soon be removed and turned into joy, by his resurrection to life. Nay, he had not only this tenderness towards his friends, but even to his greatest enemies. When he looked upon *Jerusalem*, and foresaw the terrible revenge that God would take upon his enemies and murderers, and beheld at a great distance the dreadful calamities that were coming upon them, he could not refrain from tears. He allowed himself in these innocent and human passions; but where there was danger of transgressing, as there is in no passion more than that of anger, he was continually upon his guard, and govern'd himself with great care, and never gave way to it, but upon evident and just occasion; and was never transported to any undue degree.

And yet he lived and died almost under continual provocations to it; not only from his friends and followers, but from all sorts of persons, provocations of the highest nature; if the most spiteful reproaches and injurious usage, and the most cruel persecutions and sufferings from the hands of those whom he had by all

ways endeavoured to oblige; if *the contradiction of sinners*, whom *he came to save*; in a word, if the greatest malice, accompanied with the highest ingratitude; if any, if all of these be provocations of a high nature, he was almost continually, living and dying, exercised with these. And how did he demean himself in the midst of all these provocations? With the greatest meekness and mildness imaginable, answering their bitterest reproaches and cruellest usage, either with calm reasonings, or with meek silence; that by the reasonableness and meekness of his answers and carriage, he might either convince or mollify them! When his enemies charged him with the profanation of the *Sabbath*, he only reasons the matter fairly with them, asking them, whether *it was lawful to do good, or to do evil on the sabbath-day?* telling them, that *the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*: bidding them go and learn what that means, *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*. When they accused him for being a magician, and casting out devils by the prince of the devils; he convinceth them by reason, that this was a malicious and groundless charge, telling them, that *a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*; and that *if he by Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom was divided against itself, and must fall*. When they upbraided him for *companying with publicans and sinners*; he justifies the thing, by telling them, that *the whole have no need of the physician, but the sick*; that *he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*. When they charged him with blasphemy, for saying to the man sick of the palsy, *thy sins be forgiven thee*; he only asks them this question, *Which is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee; or, take up thy bed and walk?* When they called him by the odious name of *impostor*; and *seducer of the people*, he makes no sharp answer, but appeals to his miracles, and the works which he had done among them, as an unquestionable testimony that *he came from God*. When they took up stones to throw at him, he opposeth to this hard usage, only soft, gentle words, if by that means he might stay their rage, *John x. 32. Many good works have I shewed you from my father; for which of these works do you stone me?* Thus upon all occasions he answers their malice and rage, not with boisterous passion, but by calm reason and argument; and notwithstanding it had little effect, he continues this way to the last, and as the malice of his enemies was invincible, so was his meekness. In his last sufferings, when he was so rudely and injuriously treated at his tryal, and one of the high-priest's officers struck him in the open face of the court, he only says to him, *if I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?* What could be said more meekly? What more reasonably? And when, in the extremity of his sufferings, the high-priests and the soldiers, and the people, all joined together to revile him, and insult over his misery, in the most barbarous and cruel manner; instead of breaking out into passion in this anguish of his soul, he pours out his prayers to God on their behalf, and makes the most charitable excuse and apology for them, that their crime was possibly capable of: *Father forgive them; for they know not what they do*. While he felt the bitter effects of their malice, he imputes it to their ignorance. Here is an example of meekness fit for the Son of God to give, and much more fit for the sons of men to follow; for as the wise son of *Syrach* says excellently, *Pride was not made for men, nor furious anger for him that was born of a woman*.

And having such an example left us of this great virtue, let us do likewise, since as *St. Peter* tells us, *he suffered, with all this meekness and patience, to leave us an example that ye might follow his steps*; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threaten'd not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. When we consider this example, can we resent so highly every petty injury and provocation; and upon every slighting word proceed to a challenge and a quarrel, and entertain fierce and implacable thoughts of revenge? When the son of God with so much meekness endur'd the continual contradictions of sinners, and put up such outrageous affronts and indignities from his creatures, those ungrateful wretches whom he had made, and whom he came to save, and for whom he offered to give that very blood, which they so cruelly and maliciously shed, for the expiation of their guilt.

To all which I shall add, his readiness to forgive injuries, considering the temptations he had to wrath and revenge, from the spiteful reproaches and injurious

jurious calumnies, and continual persecution of his bitter and implacable enemies without a cause; who pursued him with incessant rage and malice, and never gave over 'till they had wrought his ruin, and by false accusations, and a most violent persecution, and seditious tumults and clamours, they had forced the Roman governor, contrary to his inclination, and the convictions of his own mind and conscience, and against all reason and justice, to pass sentence upon him, when he declar'd *he saw nothing in him worthy of death*, and to condemn him to a most painful and ignominious death. Nor did their malice end here; but they aggravated his sufferings with scurrilous taunts and reproaches, and all the rudeness and indignities imaginable: and yet all this injurious and cruel usage, did not provoke him to one revengeful thought; could not extort from him so much as one peevish, or misbecoming, or threatening word. *When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffer'd, he threatned not.* But notwithstanding all this provocation, he was more ready to forgive the injuries and indignities they put upon him, than they could be to offer them, and implored the mercy and forgiveness of God for them, as heartily and as earnestly as they had solicited his death and destruction.

It is easy to give precepts of forgiveness, to bid men *love their enemies, bless them that curse them, do good to them that hate them, and pray for them that despitefully use them, and persecute them; and to forgive our brother that offends us, not only to seven times, but to seventy times seven*, without stint and limit: but the practice of this is exceeding difficult; for how hard do we find it to pass by a little provocation, and upon a very small affront and indignity offer'd to us to suppress the thought and desire of revenge, and to command our passion from breaking out in word or deed? But much more difficult is it perfectly to forgive, to love our enemies, to pray for them, and to be ready to do them good. Such a difficult virtue as this had need of all sorts of inducements to engage us to the practice of it. And therefore our blessed Lord did not think it enough strictly to enjoin it, and to enforce it upon us by the most powerful considerations, teaching us in our daily prayers, to beg mercy and forgiveness of God upon this condition, *that we forgive others*, and not to hope for it upon other terms; telling us, that as we demean ourselves toward one another in this case of injuries and provocations, so God will deal with us; *if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly father forgive you your trespasses.* Nothing can be urged upon us with greater force than this duty is, because upon our practice and performance of it, all our hopes of mercy and forgiveness from God are suspended. But yet it is difficult after all this, and therefore to allure us more powerfully to the practice of it, our Lord hath given us the example of it in the whole course of his life; in which being continually assaulted with injuries and provocations, he had perpetual occasion for the practice of forgiveness; and that in greater instances, and upon occasion of greater injuries, than any of us are capable of receiving. He who could never stand in need of forgiveness from men, who needed none from God, who had it always in his power to have revenged with ease, and to the utmost, all the provocations and affronts that were offered to him; he who had none of those powerful inducements to forgiveness which we have, was thus ready to forgive; and did it perpetually, upon the greatest, upon innumerable occasions; he forgave his enemies all their ill-will toward him, and all their vile and malicious usage of him throughout his whole life: but most remarkably at his death, when the provocations were greatest and most violent, when they fell thick and in storms upon him, and when they were most grievous and piercing, in the very agony and anguish of his sufferings; in these hard and pressing circumstances, he was so far from breathing out threatening and revenge against the authors of his cruel sufferings, that with his last breath he did most effectually declare his free forgiveness of them, and perfect charity toward them, by his fervent prayer to God for them; *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

5. And *Lastly*, Our Saviour is likewise a pattern to us of the most needful virtues, and for the practice whereof there is the greatest and most frequent occasion in human life.

Several

Several of these I have already mentioned under the former heads; as sincerity, which hath an universal influence upon all our actions; and is a principal ingredient into all the duties and services which we are to perform to God and men; humility and meekness, for the exercise whereof there is almost continual occasion in all our conversation with others. These have been spoken to, I shall therefore instance in some others, which are likewise of great and frequent use in human life.

(1). The great humanity of his carriage and deportment, of which he gave manifold instances, in his free and familiar conversation with all sorts of people. He did not despise the meanest. How familiarly did he talk with the woman of *Samaritania*? insomuch that his Disciples were offended at it, and *marvelled that he talked with her*. He did not decline the conversation of the worst of men, where he had any hope of making them better by it; and though his *companying with publicans and sinners* was often objected as matter of scandal to him, yet he would not for that reason neglect any opportunity of doing good. He was affable to his inferiors, to the meanest person that had occasion to speak with him; yea, *he rebuked his disciples, for forbidding the little children to come to him*. They would have kept them from him, because they could not imagine to what purpose they should be permitted to come to him: but though they were not capable of his instructions, yet they were of his kindness and blessing. *He took them up in his arms, and laid his hands upon them, and blessed them*; and he proposed them to his disciples as emblems of that innocency and simplicity, without which no man shall enter into the kingdom of God.

His humanity likewise appeared in the tenderness and compassion of his nature, towards all that were in want or misery of any kind. *He healed all manner of sicknesses and diseases among the people, and went about doing good*. And when his followers, by their long attendance upon him in desert and solitary places to hear his doctrine, were pinched with hunger, he could not find in his heart to dismiss them without some refreshment; and having no other means, did it by a miracle. He was very apt to sympathize with the condition of others, *to weep with them that wept*, as he did with the friends of *Lazarus* over his grave: nay, he had a tenderness for his enemies; when he beheld *Jerusalem*, and the sad fate which hung over it for their obstinate impenitency, he could not refrain from tears at the thoughts of it.

Another instance of his humanity was his easiness to be entreated, and readiness to yield to the request of those who desired his company, or implored his help and assistance. And as he was most ready to do good to all, so he did not disdain to receive kindness from any; complying cheerfully with the desires of those who invited him to their houses, and accepting kindly any well-intended respect. How did he resent the extraordinary kindness of the devout woman, who poured the box of rich ointment upon his head? taking care that the memory of it should be transmitted to all generations, and proclaimed over the whole world, *Matth. xxvi. 13*.

(2.) Another very needful virtue, and for which our Lord was very eminent, was his neglect and disregard of the opinion of men, in comparison of his duty. As he was not affected, much less puff'd up with their applause, (which is an argument of a vain and light mind) so was he as little moved with their censures and reproaches, by which he was neither disorder'd in his passions, nor discouraged from well-doing. He took heed to his duty, and made sure to do the things which pleased God, and was not very solicitous what men said or thought of him. He observed in the *Pharisees*, how great a temptation and hindrance to the receiving of his doctrine, an undue regard to the praise and censure of men was: *They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*, as he tells us, *John xii. 43.* and *Ch. v. 44.* *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?* Not that we are to slight and neglect the opinion of others concerning our actions; that is pride and self-conceit; and our Lord himself was not so regardless of his reputation, as not to take great care to give no just occasion of censure, no needless handle to slander and calumny; he vindicated himself upon all occasions, and was ready to give a fair and reasonable account of his actions, to those who

found fault with them, nay, even maliciously carp'd at them; he prudently avoided occasions of offence, and by wise and cautious answers, many times avoided the snares that were laid to bring him under obloquy and reproach: but in competition with his plain duty, he neither regarded the applause nor censures of men; he complied with them in nothing that was bad, to gain their good opinion and esteem; nor was he hinder'd and discouraged from any thing that was good, for fear of being ill spoken of, or of having a bad interpretation put upon his good actions.

And this is a virtue very necessary to a good man, especially in bad times, and requires a good degree of fortitude and firmness of resolution to make a man master of it. And 'tis not more necessary than it is reasonable: for it is not in our power, whether men shall speak well or ill of us; but it is in our power, whether we will do well or ill. It is many times impossible to please men, they are so divided in their opinions about good and evil; but we may make sure to please God, and to gain his praise and approbation, *whose judgment is always according to truth*. It is a vain and endless thing to live up to the humours and opinions of men, which are variable and uncertain; but if we keep steady to our duty, we live to the consciences of men, which first or last will come to themselves, and come over to us, and approve of that which is good. This is, as St. Paul speaks, *to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*.

(3.) Another virtue for which there is great occasion in human life, and for which our Lord was very remarkable, was his contentedness in a mean and poor condition, and such was his condition to the very lowest degree. He was destitute of the ordinary conveniencies and necessary supports of life; he lived generally upon the kindness and charity of others, and when that failed, and he wanted ordinary supports, as he often did, he was maintained by miracle: and yet in this mean and necessitous condition, he had a constant evenness and serenity of mind; he had no *anxious care and solicitude* upon him, *what he should eat, and what he should drink, or wherewithal he should be clothed*; he never murmured at the unequal providence of God, never utter'd one discontented, or envious word at the plenty and prosperity of others; he rather pitied the misfortune of rich and great men, who were exposed to so many temptations, that *it was very hard for them, in his opinion, to be saved*; but he enjoyed himself, and served God, and went about doing good, and depended upon the providence of God for his daily food; and if at any time that was wanting, he tells his disciples, that *He had meat to eat which they knew not of*; for *it was his meat and drink to do the will of his father*. By all that appears in the history of his life, (and we are sure that it is true) no man was ever poorer, and yet no man ever more contented than he was; which is not only an example of contentedness to those, whom the providence of God hath placed in the extremity of meanness and want, but a much stronger and more forcible argument of contentment in every condition. For discontent is not only the portion of the poor, but of those who have a competency, because they have not plenty; and many times of those who have plenty and abundance, because they are wanton and foolish, and know not what they would have; so that our Saviour, by giving an example of contentment to those of the poorest and meanest condition, hath given it much more to those who are in better circumstances. A narrow fortune is riches in comparison of none; a competency is plenty, compared with poverty, and the want of the ordinary accommodations of life. If the Son of God submitted to the lowest and poorest condition, and bore it with so much evenness and tranquillity of mind; well may we, if God call us to it. If he that was *heir of all things*, was destitute of all things, and well contented to be so; shall we murmur and repine, if we be in the same circumstances? If this example be of any force, (as it is certainly of the greatest) should the providence of God see fit to reduce us to the lowest condition of want, we have no reason for discontent; but if he affords us a competency, we have no colour and pretence for it, unless we think ourselves better than the Son of God, and can claim a greater right to the possessions and enjoyments of this world, than he that made it.

Before

Before this example, we might have thought that poverty and meanness had been a sign of God's hatred and displeasure, or at least an argument of less love and regard: but now that we see him, whom God loved infinitely better than any man in the world, to have been one of the poorest men that ever lived; this is a demonstration, that a man may be entirely beloved of God, tho' he be in the poorest and most destitute condition; for in such a condition he thought fit to place *his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased*. And if poverty be consistent with the highest degree of God's love and favour, we may bear it contentedly; and if there be reason for contentment even in poverty, to be discontented in any condition that is above it, is shameful and intolerable. Of such force is this example of our Lord, to banish discontent from any condition we are liable to in this world. The

(4.) And *last* virtue I shall instance in, and for the exercise whereof there is very great and frequent occasion in human life, is patience under sufferings, and such a perfect resignation of our selves to the will of God, that whatever pleaseth him should please us, how distasteful and grievous soever it be. And of this virtue our blessed Saviour was the greatest example that ever was; his whole life, from his birth to his death, was made up of persecution and patience, and was a continual exercise of his virtue. There had been great examples in all ages of the sufferings and patience of good men, which we might propound to our selves with great advantage; and so St. James exhorts the Christians to do, *Jam. v. 10. Take, my brethren, the Prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.* Job especially was a most eminent example in this kind: *Ye have heard*, says he, *of the patience of Job.* And all these examples are of great use, and considerable arguments to this virtue; but the pattern of our Lord's sufferings and patience is a greater example, and a more powerful argument than all these. His sufferings were far greater than any man's ever were; *Never was any sorrow like to his sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger*: And his patience was greater than any man's ever was, not only because he suffer'd more than any one of the sons of men ever did, but because he suffer'd without cause, being perfectly innocent, and free from the least personal fault and guilt. Well may we *bear the indignation of the Lord patiently, because we have sinned against him*. Whatever we suffer, our consciences tell us we have deserved it all, and much more from the hand of God, and that *our punishment is always less than our iniquities have deserved*. Sin is at the bottom of all our sufferings, and *if we be buffeted for our faults, we ought to take it patiently*. Upon this consideration, St. Peter recommends to us the example of our Lord's sufferings and patience, as a powerful argument to work the same temper and disposition in us, *1 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when you do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps, who did no sin.* Where the Apostle insinuates a two-fold difference between our Lord's suffering for us, and ours. He suffered for us: but we upon our own account, and for our own faults. He was perfectly innocent, *He had no sin*, and yet he suffer'd with so much patience; much more ought we: for by how much the more guilt, so much the greater reason for patience; and the more innocent the person is that suffers, so much the more perfect and commendable is his patience.

So that the greatness of our Lord's sufferings, consider'd together with his perfect innocency, gives his example a peculiar force and advantage above all other examples whatsoever. And therefore the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, after a great number of examples of the persecution and patience of the saints in all ages, not content with these, he adds that of our Lord, as the most perfect and powerful example of all others, *Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3. Wherefore seeing we also are compass'd about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.* Such contradiction of sinners; such as no man ever en-

dured; and yet he bore all this, not with a stoical and stupid insensibility, but with a true patience. For no man had greater apprehensions of suffering, and a more quick and tender sense of it, than he had. He had not only the more manly virtues of wisdom, and resolution, and constancy; but was cloathed also with the softer passions of human nature, meekness and compassion, and grief, and a tender sense of pain and suffering. *He took our infirmities,* says the Prophet, *and bore our griefs.* And this he express'd both in his agony in the garden, and in his behaviour upon the cross; he did not despise pain, but dreaded it, and yet submitted to it; he did not out-brave his sufferings, but bore them decently; he had a human sense of them, but underwent them with a divine patience, resigning himself absolutely to the will of God, when he saw them coming; and when they were upon him, expressing a great sense of pain, without the least sign of impatience. And hereby he was a pattern accommodated to the weakest and tenderest of mankind; he did not give us an extravagant example of bravery, and a sturdy resolution; but, which was much fitter for us, of a patient submission to the will of God, under a great sense of suffering.

Before I come to the *fifth* and *last* advantage of our Lord's example, it will be requisite to clear what hath been said from *three* or *four* obvious objections. But this I shall reserve for another discourse.

S E R M O N CXXXVII.

P R E A C H ' D *March 25, 1686.*

The Life of Jesus Christ consider'd, as our Example.

*The Third
Sermon on
this Text.*

I P E T. II. 21.

-----*Leaving us an Example, that ye should follow his steps.*

THE example of Christ is an argument never unseasonable; and though it be somewhat foreign to the occasion of *this day*, yet it will afford us something not improper to be consider'd by us, concerning the blessed Mother of our Lord. I have handled this argument of our Lord's example very largely, and among other things, have shewn the manifold advantages of it, in these following respects:

I. That the example of our Lord is a most absolute and perfect pattern, being the life of God, in the nature and likeness of man.

II. A most familiar and easy example, in which we see the several virtues of a good life practis'd in such instances, and upon such occasions, as do frequently happen in human life.

III. It is an encouraging example; nothing being more apt to give life to good resolutions and endeavours, than to see all that which God requires of us, performed by one in our own nature, and a man as like ourselves, as it is possible for a perfect pattern to be.

IV. It is likewise an universal example, calculated as equally as is possible for all conditions and capacities of men, and fitted for general direction and imitation of all sorts of virtue and goodness; such virtues as are the greatest and most substantial, the most rare and unusual, the most useful and beneficial to others, the most hard and difficult to be practis'd, and for the exercise whereof there is the greatest and most frequent occasion in human life. There remains now only to be spoken to, the

V. And

V. And *last* Advantage, which I mentioned of our Lord's example, that it is, in the nature of it, very powerful to engage and oblige all men to the imitation of it. But before I enter upon this, I proposed to clear what hath been already said concerning our Lord's example, from *three* or *four* obvious objections.

The *first* objection is, that a great part of our Saviour's life consisted of miraculous actions, wherein we cannot imitate him.

This is very true; and for that very reason, because we cannot imitate him herein, we are not obliged to do it: but we may imitate the compassion and charity which he shewed in his miracles, by such ways and in such effects, as are within the compass of our power. We are not *anointed*, as he was, *with the Holy Ghost and with power, to heal all manner of sickness and disease*: but we may *go about doing good*, as he did, so far as we have ability and opportunity; we may comfort those in their sickness and distress, whom we are not able in a miraculous manner to recover and relieve; and in diseases that are curable, we may help the poorer at the expence of our charity, and do that by flower and ordinary means, which our Saviour did by a word in an instant.

Secondly, Against the universality of our Saviour's example, it is objected, that he hath given us no pattern of some conditions and relations of life, for which there seems to have been as great need and reason, as for any other.

To this I answer, that though his single state of life did hinder him from being formally an example as to some of the most common relations, as of a father, and a husband; yet he was virtually so in the principle and practice of universal charity, which principle, if it be truly rooted in us, will sufficiently guide and direct us in the duties of particular relations.

And whereas it is further objected, that he hath left us no example of that, which by many is esteemed the only religious state of life, *viz.* perfect retirement from the world, for the more devout serving of God, and freeing us from the temptations of the world, such as is that of *Monks* and *Hermits*; this perhaps may seem to some a great oversight and omission: but our Lord in great wisdom thought fit to give a pattern of a quite different sort of life, which was, not to fly the conversation of men, and to live in a monastery or a wilderness; but to do good among men, to live in the world with great freedom, and with great innocency. He did indeed sometimes retire himself, for the more free and private exercise of devotion; as we ought to do: but he pass'd his life chiefly in the conversation of men, that they might have all the benefit that was possible, of his instruction and example. We read, that *he was carried into the wilderness to be tempted*; but not that he lived there, to avoid temptation. He hath given us an example of denying the world, without leaving it; and of renouncing not only the pomp and vanity, but even the lawful enjoyments and conveniencies of life, when it may serve to any good end, either of glory to God, or of advantage to men; teaching us hereby, that charity is a duty, no less necessary than devotion; that we cannot serve God better, than by endeavouring the good and happiness of men. So that if our Saviour's example be of authority with us, that will soon decide which is the most perfect state of life, to go out of the world, or to live innocently and usefully in it. And since neither our Saviour, nor his Apostles, have recommended it to us, by their example, nor by one word of precept or counsel tending that way, it seems very plain, that they did not esteem *Monkery* the most perfect, much less the only religious state of life. There could not have been so deep a silence throughout the New Testament concerning so important a piece of Religion, as the Church of *Rome* would bear us in hand this is: for to be profess'd of some monastical order, they call *entering into Religion*; and they speak of it, as the most direct and ready way to heaven; and not only so, but they give fair encouragement to believe, that to die, or be buried in a *Monk's* habit, will go a great way (they are loth to tell us how far) in the carrying of a bad man towards heaven, or at least to the abatement of his pain in *Purgatory*.

Thirdly, It is objected, that some particulars of our Saviour's carriage towards rulers and magistrates seem liable to exception, and not proper for our imitation; as his bold and free reproofs of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, many of whom were chief rulers, and of greatest authority among them; and his message to *Herod*,

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Go and tell that fox. This opprobrious and reproachful treatment of magistrates, seems directly contrary to an express law of God, *Exod. xxii. 28, Thou shalt not revile the Gods, or Judges, nor speak evil of the ruler of thy people.*

But to this the answer is plain, that our Lord used this freedom by the virtue and privilege of his prophetic office, and of his immediate commission from God; it being the office of Prophets, and a part of their commission, to reprove kings and rulers with all freedom and plainness, because they were really superior to them in the execution of that office. In all positive laws of respect to superiors, there is an exception of the divine commission; because in that case, the Prophet speaks in the name, and by the authority of one infinitely greater than the greatest upon earth; as in the Lord's name, and by his commission, any man may check inferior magistrates, and that in such a manner, as would be rudeness and insolence for any other not so warranted, to do it. And of this, there are manifold examples in the Prophets of the Old Testament; and what the tenour of their commission was, we may see in that given to the Prophet *Jeremiah*, Chap. i. Verse 10. *Behold, I have set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull up, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant,* (that is, to denounce judgments and calamities, or peace and prosperity to them) and Ver. 17. 18. *Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For behold I have made thee this day a fenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.* This commission set him above them all in the discharge of his office: And therefore, what our Lord did in this kind, by virtue of an extraordinary commission, and the privilege of a Prophet immediately sent by God, is not to be drawn into example in ordinary cases: for we may do that by special commission from God, which the ordinary rules of duty, and respect to princes and governors, will by no means allow to be done.

The *Fourth* and *Last* objection is, that our blessed Saviour does not seem to bear himself with that duty and respect towards his mother, which that relation seems to require. And to speak according to the first appearance of things, this seems to be, of all other, the most exceptionable part of his life, and to require some particular and extraordinary reason, not so obvious at first sight, for the vindication of it.

There are, to my best remembrance and observation, but *five* passages, in the history of our Saviour's life, concerning his carriage towards his mother, and his discourse with her, and of her; in all which he seems rather to treat her with some appearance of neglect, than with any great shew of reverence and respect. Not that we are to imagine, but that he did pay her an entire duty; for we know that he *fulfilled all righteousness*: but for reasons best known to his infinite wisdom, he thought fit very much to conceal it in his public behaviour, and to have as little notice taken of it in the history of his life.

And the *first* passage is, *Luke ii. 48.* when his parents having lost him, at last found him in the temple disputing among the Doctors; and his mother reproved him, *Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing*: He gives them this short and obscure answer, which they knew not what to make of; *How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?* This happen'd when he was but *twelve years old*. And that we may not think, that during his minority, he did ordinarily assume this behaviour towards his parents, but only upon this first essay of his public appearance, the Evangelist purposely adds, *Ver. 51. that he went down with his parents to Nazareth, and was subject to them.*

The *second* passage is, *John ii. 4.* when his mother desiring him to work a miracle, at his first appearance and entrance upon his public ministry, he takes occasion to declare to her, that he was discharged from her conduct and government, and this in terms to all appearance of no great respect: *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.* *Greg. Nyssen* reads both Sentences with an interrogation; *What have I to do with thee? is not mine hour now come?* As if he had said, "Why dost thou interpose in these matters? is not the
" time

"time come, that I am to enter upon my office; and in the discharge of it, to be directed by God, and none else?"

The *third* passage is, *Matth. xii. 47.* When he was told, that *his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him: Who is my mother, says he, and who are my brethren?* And pointing to his disciples, *Behold my mother, and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.* Here is but little appearance of regard; for we do not find, that he left the business he was about, to speak with her when she desired it. Nor it seems did she understand her power so well as the Church of *Rome* hath done since, when (as is to be seen in some of their Mass-books) they address to her in these terms, *Jure matris impera redemptori*; "By the authority of a mother, command the Redeemer."

The *fourth* passage is not much different from the former, *Luke xi. 27.* When a certain woman said to him, *blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast suck'd; he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.* He does not deny what was said in honour of her; but turns his discourse another way: and foreseeing the danger of a superstitious veneration of her, he seems to bring her down to the same level with all sincere Christians; teaching us, that no external privilege or relation, how glorious soever, no not that of being the mother of the Son of God, was so valuable as doing the will of God: *Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*

The *last* passage is at the time of his death, *John xix. 25, 26, 27.* Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother: when Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, *Woman, behold thy Son: then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother.* And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. Here indeed he shewed his great kindness and concernment for her, in committing her to the care of his best beloved friend; but yet without any extraordinary demonstration of respect in the manner of it.

These are all the passages I know in the Gospel, which concern our Lord's carriage towards his mother; which, upon the whole matter, is so strange, that we cannot imagine but there must be some special and extraordinary reason for it: and we who have liv'd to see and know what hath happen'd in the Christian world, are now able to give a better account of this great caution and reservedness in his behaviour towards her; namely, that out of his infinite wisdom and foresight, he so demean'd himself toward her, that he might lay no temptation before men, nor give the least occasion to the idolizing of her. He always call'd her *woman*; and by the privilege of his divinity and high office, hardly seems to pay her the respect due to a mother, that he might restrain all Christians from worshipping her as a Deity; or if they did, that they might have no colour or excuse for it, from any thing he said or did. This is so probable an account of that which might otherwise seem so unaccountable, that I persuade my self, that all unprejudiced persons will readily assent to it. And which is farther remarkable in this matter, the Apostles of our Lord in all their writings use the same reservedness; and no doubt, by the direction of the same Spirit, concerning the blessed Mother of our Lord. For, throughout the history of the *Acts*, and all the *Epistles* of the *Apostles*, there is but once mention made of her, and that only by the by, *Acts i. 14.* where it is said, that the *Disciples all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus.* So far are they from proposing her for an object of our worship, that they only once make mention of her, and that joining with others in prayer and supplication to God, without any special remark concerning her; much less do they speak of any devotion paid to her.

And surely if this *blessed among women, the Mother of our Lord*, (for I keep to the titles which the Scripture gives her) have any sense of what we do here below, she cannot but look down with the greatest disdain upon that sacrilegious and idolatrous worship which is paid to her, to the high dishonour of the great God and our Saviour, and the infinite scandal of his Religion. How can she, without indignation, behold how they play the fool in the Church of *Rome* about her? What an idol they make of her image? and with what sottishness they give divine honour to it? How they place her in their idolatrous pictures in equal

rank

rank with *the blessed Trinity*, and turn the salutation of the Angel, *Ave Maria, Hail Mary, full of grace*, into a kind of *Prayer*; and in their *Bead-roll* of devotion repeat it ten times, for once that they say the *Lord's Prayer*, as of greater virtue and efficacy? And indeed they almost juggle out the devotion due to Almighty God, and our blessed Saviour, by their endless idolatry to her.

So that the greater part of their religion, both public and private, is made up of that, which was no part at all of the religion of the Apostles and primitive Christians; nay, which plainly contradicts it: for that expressly teaches us, that there is but one object of our prayers, and one mediator by whom we are to make our addresses to God. *There is one God; and one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus*, says St. Paul, when he gives a standing rule concerning prayer in the Christian Church. And yet notwithstanding all the care that our blessed Saviour and his Apostles could take, to prevent the gross idolatry of the blessed Mother of our Lord, how blindly and wilfully have the Church of Rome run into it? and in despite of the clearest evidence and conviction, do obstinately and impudently persist in it, and justify themselves in so abominable a practice. I come now to the

V. And *last* advantage of our Lord's example, that it is in the nature of it very powerful, to engage and oblige all men to the imitation of it.

It is almost equally calculated for persons of all capacities and conditions, for the wise and the weak, for those of high and low degree; for all men are alike concerned to be happy. And the imitation of this example, is the most ready and direct way to it, the most effectual means we can use to compass this great and universal end; nay, it is not only the means, but the end, the best and most essential part of it. To be like our Lord, is to be as good as it is possible for men to be; and goodness is the highest perfection that any being is capable of; and the perfection of every being is its happiness.

There is a kind of contagion in all examples; men are very apt to do what they see others do, tho' it be very bad: every day's experience furnisheth us with many and sad instances of the influence of bad examples; but there are peculiar charms in that which is good and excellent. A perfect pattern of goodness does strongly allure and invite to the imitation of it, and a great example of virtue to a well-disposed mind is a mighty temptation, and apt to inspirit us with good resolutions, to endeavour after that in our selves, which we so much esteem and admire in others. And such is the example of our Lord, perfect as is possible, and yet obvious to common imitation, and as much fitted for the general direction of mankind, in all sorts of virtue and goodness, as any one single example can be imagined to be.

The virtues of his life are pure, without any mixture of infirmity and imperfection. He had humility without meanness of spirit; innocency without weakness; wisdom without cunning; and constancy and resolution in that which was good, without stiffness of conceit, and peremptoriness of humour: in a word, his virtues were shining without vanity, heroical without any thing of transport, and very extraordinary without being in the least extravagant.

His life was even and of one tenour, quiet, and without noise and tumult, always employed about the same work, in doing the things which pleased God, and were of greatest benefit and advantage to men. Who would not write after such a copy; so perfect, and yet so familiar, and fit for our imitation? Who would not be ambitious to live the life which God lived, when he was pleased to become man and dwell among us?

We are ambitious to imitate those whom we esteem, and are apt to have their example in great dearth and regard, from whom we have received great kindness and mighty benefits. This pattern, which our religion proposeth to us, is the example of one whom we ought to reverence, and whom we have reason to love above any person in the world; 'tis the example of our Lord and Master, of our Sovereign and our Saviour, of the Founder of our Religion, and of *the Author and Finisher of our Faith*; it is an example that carries authority with it, and commands our imitation. *You call me Lord and Master*, says he himself, recommending to us the example of his own humility, *John* xiii. 13, 14. *You call*

call me Lord and Master, and ye say well; for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet, that is, stoop to the lowest and meanest office to serve one another; for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

Yet farther, 'tis the example of our best friend and greatest benefactor, of him who laid down his life for us, and sealed his love to us with his own blood; and while we were bitter enemies to him, did and suffer'd more for us, than any man ever did for his dearest friend. How powerfully must such a pattern recommend goodness, and kindness, and compassion to us, who have had so much comfort and advantage from them? Had not the Son of God commiserated our case, and pitied and relieved us in our low and wretched condition, we had been extremely and for ever miserable, beyond all imagination, and past all remedy. All the kindness and compassion, all the mercy and forgiveness he would have us practise towards one another, he himself first exercised upon us; and surely we have a much greater obligation upon us to the practice of these virtues, than he had. For he did all this for our sakes; we do it for our own. We have a natural obligation, both in point of duty and interest: his was voluntary, and what he took upon himself, that he might at once be a Saviour and an example to us. He that commands us to do good to others, was our great benefactor; he that requires us to forgive our enemies, shed his own blood for the forgiveness of our sins; while we were enemies to him, laid down his life for us, making himself the example of that goodness, which he commands us to show to others.

Are any of us reduced to poverty and want? let us think of him, who *being Lord of all, had not where to lay his head; who being rich, for our sakes became a beggar, that we through his poverty might be made rich.* Are we persecuted for righteousness sake, and exercised with sufferings and reproaches? *Let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.*

When we are ready to be discouraged in well-doing, by the opposition we meet withal from the ingratitude of men, and the malicious interpretation of our good actions perverting the best things, done with the best mind and to the best ends, to some ill purpose and design, *consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be weary and faint in your minds.*

Can we be proud; when the Son of God *humbled himself, and became of no reputation; emptied himself of all his glory, and was contented to be despised and rejected of men?* Shall we be covetous, and thirst after the things of this world; when we consider how the Son of God despised them, and trampled upon them? Shall we contemn and despise the poor; nay, can we chuse but esteem them for his sake, whom they resemble, and whose low and indigent condition in the world hath made poverty, not only tolerable, but glorious? Can we be peevish and froward, and apt to fly out into passion upon every little occasion; when we consider the meekness of the Son of God, and with what serenity and evenness of mind he demeaned himself, under great and continual provocations? Shall we be discontented in any condition; when we consider how contented the Son of God was in the meanest and most destitute condition; how he welcomed all events, and was so perfectly resigned to the will of his heavenly Father, that whatsoever pleased God, pleased him? Shall we be so ready to separate from the Communion of the Church of God, upon pretence of something that we think amiss, or less pure and perfect; (which will always be in this world) when the Son of God lived and died in the Communion of a Church guilty of great corruptions both in doctrine and practice, such as can with no colour be objected to ours?

Shall we resent injuries, slanders and calumnies so heinously, as to be out of all patience; when we consider with what meekness of temper, and how little disturbance of mind the Son of God bore all these? *How he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that pluck'd off the hair, and withheld not his face from shame and spitting? How he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as the sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; being reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffer'd, he threaten'd not; but committed himself to him*

that judgeth righteously? Such vile and barbarous usage the Son of God met withal; and yet under all this, he *possess'd his soul in patience*: and do we expect to be better treated than he was? Was goodness itself contented to be traduced, and evil spoken of, perfect innocence to be slander'd and persecuted: and shall we who are sinners, great sinners, think ourselves worthy to escape these things, and too good to have that done to us, which was done to one infinitely better than we are? It is our Lord's own argument, and there is great weight and reason in it; *if the world hate you, ye know, that it hated me, before it hated you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than the Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; it is enough for the disciple, that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord: if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of the household?*

Can we entertain thoughts of revenge, when we have such a pattern of forgiving before us, who poured out his blood for the expiation of the guilt of them that shed it, and spent his last breath in fervent and charitable prayers for his betrayers and murderers? *Lord endow us with the like temper: but do not try us with the like sufferings.*

Thus by setting the example of our Lord before us, and keeping this pattern always in our eye, we may continually correct all our own errors and defects, all the distempers of our minds, and the faults and irregularities of our lives; we may argue ourselves into all kind of virtue and goodness, and from such an example be strongly excited, and sweetly led to the practice of it.

Let us not be discouraged by the consideration of our own weakness, for he who hath given us such an example of virtue, is ready likewise to give us his Holy Spirit, to assist and enable us to conform ourselves to this pattern of our Lord and Master, and to follow the blessed steps of his holy life.

Now the God of Peace, &c.

SERMON CXXXVIII.

The Sufferings of Christ consider'd, as a proper Means of our Salvation.

I COR. I. 23, 24.

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.

* Preach'd
on Good-
Friday.

THE sufferings of the Son of God for the sins of men, as they are a subject never improper to be insisted on; so they are more especially seasonable at this time*, which the Christian Church hath for so many ages set apart for the solemn commemoration of them, in order to our more due preparation for the receiving the Sacrament at *Easter*; which next after *the Lord's-day* (which was set apart by the Apostles for a weekly commemoration of our Saviour's Resurrection) is the first and most solemn festival that is taken notice of in ecclesiastical antiquity, to be generally observed by Christians; at which time all Christians that were admitted to those sacred mysteries, did receive the holy Sacrament; and for this reason, I have pitched upon this subject at this time.

Among all the prejudices that were raised against the Christian Religion, when it first appeared in the world, this was the greatest of all other, that the first author of this doctrine should come to so miserable and shameful an end, as to die

upon

upon the cross; that *the Son of God* should be *deliver'd into the hands of men*, to be so cruelly and ignominiously handled. This both *Jews* and *Greeks* laid hold on, as the most popular objection against Christianity, and matter of just reproach to that Religion, which pretended to be brought from heaven by the Son of God: for tho' he call'd himself the Son of God, yet he died like a man; and not only so, but suffer'd as a malefactor.

But, notwithstanding the odium of this objection, the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour, who were sent by him to publish his doctrine to the world, did not in the least endeavour to hide and dissemble the matter; but did openly, and without disguise, declare to the world, that he in whom they believed, and endeavoured to persuade others to believe, was, for *speaking the truth, which he had heard from God*, arraigned at *Jerusalem*, and there by *wicked hands crucified and slain*. And tho' they knew that this seemed very foolish and absurd, both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, whom they designed to convert to Christianity, and d'd extremely prejudice them against it; yet nevertheless they persisted in the course they had begun, leaving God to do his own work, in his own way; and they found the success of it. For tho' it was a very plain story which they told the world, and appeared even ridiculous to those who thought themselves the wisest and ablest judges of these matters; yet being the truth of God, it had a mighty efficacy upon the minds of men, notwithstanding all the prejudice that was raised against it. *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe*; by this doctrine which seemed so absurd to human reason, to gain many to the belief and entertainment of it.

Indeed it was not suited to the genius either of the *Jews* or *Gentiles*; for they, according to their different ways of institution, expected quite another thing: *Ver. 22. The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. The Jews require a sign*: they expected the Apostles should have given some extraordinary testimony from heaven, such as was *Elias* his calling for fire down from heaven, to consume those that opposed and resisted them. Such things as these they read of the Prophets in their law, and they expected the *Messias* would do the same, and greater things. And though in truth he did so, wrought more and greater miracles than *Moses* and all the Prophets had done before him, yet their curiosity was not satisfied; and notwithstanding the great works which he did among them, they were continually importuning him for a sign, *Matth. xii. 38. Then certain of the Scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee*. This seems a strange and unreasonable demand, considering the many and great works he had done among them, which were so generally known. So that in all probability, it was some particular and peculiar kind of miracle which they desired, as appears from *Matth. xvi. 1. The Pharisees also with the Sadduces came, and tempting, desired him, that he would shew them a sign from heaven*. He had wrought many miracles on earth, in healing the sick, and opening the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf, in cleansing the lepers, and making the lame to walk; but these they looked upon as an inferior sort of miracles, here was all this while no extraordinary thing immediately *from heaven*, if they could once see *that*, they would be satisfied. But when no such thing was done, and at last God permitted him to die upon the cross, as an impostor and seditious person; and it appeared plainly that he, who pretended to free others from diseases, could not save himself from death: this confirmed them in their unbelief, and upon good reason as they thought. And that this was a sign which they particularly expected, and thought they had cause so to do, appears by their upbraiding of him with the want of it in the time of his suffering, *Matth. xxvii. 39. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it up in three days, save thyself; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross*. And it was not only the malice and ignorance of the common people that objected this to him; but even the Priests, and Scribes, and Elders, insisted upon the same thing; *Ver. 41, 42, 43. Likewise also the chief Priests mocking him, with the Scribes and Elders, said, he saved others, himself he cannot save: if he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God*. By this passage you see what it was the *Jews* expected;

pected; that if our Saviour had been *the Son of God*, he should have *saved himself*; when they went about to crucify him, that God should have rescued him out of their hands, and given some extraordinary testimony from heaven to his innocency; and for this reason, the preaching of *Christ crucified* was very offensive to them: *The Jews require a sign; but we preach Christ crucified.*

Such was the temper and disposition of the *Jews*: but now the *Gentiles*, according to their way of institution, expected that the Apostles should have discoursed to them upon philosophical principles, and have demonstrated things to them in *their way*. *The Greeks seek after wisdom*; they were great searchers after wisdom and knowledge, and they valued nothing but what had the appearance of it, and what was delivered with great sharpness of wit and reasoning, and set off with art and eloquence. Had the Apostles pretended to some new theory of natural or moral philosophy, and discoursed to them about the first principles of all things, about the chief good, or about the nature of the soul, they would have heard them with great patience and delight. Nothing but deep and subtle speculations, about these kind of arguments, did relish with them, and please their palates. But the history of our Saviour, his life and death, and resurrection, and the plain precepts of his doctrine, were dry and insipid things to them, and were so far from having a shew of wisdom and philosophy, that they appeared foolish and ridiculous to them.

But the design of God in the Christian Religion, being not to please the humour, and gratify the curiosity of men; but really to do them good, and to reform the manners of mankind, he used quite another method; which how offensive soever it might be to those who thought themselves wise, yet it was really the wisest and most powerful means to that end: so the Apostle tells us here in the text; *But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness: but unto them that are called*, that is, to those whose minds are duly prepared to consider things impartially, and to receive the truth, *the power of God, and the wisdom of God*; a most wise and powerful means to reform the world, an eminent instance of the divine power and wisdom.

In these words, we have these *two* things considerable:

First, The exception which the world took at the doctrine of the Gospel, upon account of our Saviour's sufferings: *Christ crucified* was *to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness*.

Secondly, That notwithstanding the seeming unreasonableness and absurdity of it, it was a most wise and effectual contrivance for the end to which it was designed and appointed: *But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God*. I shall speak something to each of these, as briefly and plainly as I can. I begin with the

First, The exception which the world took at the doctrine of the Gospel, upon account of our Saviour's sufferings. The world were generally offended at it, but not all upon the same account; the *Jews* took one kind of exception against it, and the *Heathen* another: *We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness*. They were both offended at the same thing, the low and suffering condition of our Saviour; but not upon the same reason. The *Jews* thought, that this mean appearance and condition of our Saviour, was unsuitable to the power of God; and the *Heathen*, that it was not agreeable to the wisdom of men.

The *Jews* from the tradition of their fathers, to which (just as the Church of Rome does now-a-days) they paid a greater reverence, than to the written word of God, were possess'd with a strong persuasion, that the *Messias* whom they expected, and was foretold by the Prophets, was to be a great temporal prince, to appear in great splendor and glory, to be a mighty conqueror, and not only to free them from the *Roman* yoke, which they were then under; but to subdue all nations to them, and so bring them under *their* dominion and government. And this did so generally prevail among them, that even the Disciples of our Saviour were as strongly possess'd with this conceit, as any of the rest; inasmuch that the mother of *James* and *John* made it her solemn request to our Saviour, that *her two sons might sit, one on his right-hand and the other on his left, in his kingdom*. And though he had told his disciples just before, that *he must go*

up to Jerusalem and suffer many things of the Scribes and Pharisees, and be betrayed and put to death; yet the other conceit of his temporal dominion and greatness did so possess their minds, that they could not understand this saying, and it was hid from them that they perceived it not, as St. Luke tells us *Luke ix. 45.* Nay, even after his death and resurrection, when he appeared to them, this still stuck in their minds, as appears by that question which they asked him immediately before his ascension, *Acts i. 6.* When they were come together, they asked of him, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? They took it for granted, the *Messias* would do it one time or other, and they enquire of him, whether that were the time.

So that the *Jews* being so firmly fix'd in this conceit of the temporal reign of the *Messias*, nothing could be a greater stumbling-block to them, than the mean and suffering condition, in which our Saviour appeared. The meanness of his birth and life was a great objection against him; but when they saw him put to death so ignominiously, and that he did not then shew his glory and power, to save himself from that cruel and shameful death, they could rather believe any thing than that this was the *Messias* foretold, and whom they had so long expected. They made full account that the *Messias*, whenever he came, would live in great splendour and glory, and do great things for the advantage and honour of their nation; the least they expected from him, was their deliverance from the *Roman* yoke, and the establishing of the throne of *David* for ever; or if his beginning had been obscure, that he would at last break forth in great lustre and majesty; or, if they could have supposed that the *Messias* should be persecuted, and condemned, and nailed to the cross, yet they doubted not but then God would have given testimony to him by some sign from heaven, and have rescued him from the cross in a miraculous manner: but seeing nothing of all this, nothing but poverty and meanness, reproach and suffering attending him, they concluded, whatever miracles he pretended to, this could not be the Son of God, the true *Messias*.

On the other side, the heathen philosophers, who were not possess'd with these conceits about the *Messias*, they were offended at the unreasonableness and folly, as they thought, of the Apostles doctrine, who went about to persuade the world, that a man who had lately suffer'd and was crucified at *Jerusalem*, was a great Prophet come into the world; nay, the Son of God, in whom all men ought to believe, and by whom they ought to hope for life and salvation: as if it were reasonable to think, that God would have exposed the most innocent and virtuous person that ever was, to so great reproach and sufferings, that the Son of God should die, and that life and immortality were to be hoped for from him, who was crucified and put to death. This they looked upon as a story so ill framed, that to all wise and sagacious men, it destroyed its own credit and belief. For though they said he was risen again from the dead, yet before that could be entertained by men of philosophical minds, there were many deep points to be determined, as concerning the nature of the soul, and whether it can subsist separately from the body, and whether a body once dead can be restored to life again, and re-united to the soul?

And as for his doctrine, which the Apostles pretended to deliver, it was a plain, and rude thing, without art or eloquence, nothing of deep speculation, or strict demonstration in it: in short, so far from being worthy of a teacher come from God, that it was below the pitch of an ordinary Philosopher. These and such like things were, in all probability, the exceptions which the heathen philosophers took at the Apostles preaching, concerning our Saviour's death, and his doctrine; and they had some colour in them.

But upon impartial examination, it will appear, that notwithstanding these exceptions, the sufferings of our Saviour, consider'd with all the circumstances that belong to them, were a very wise and effectual method made use of by almighty God, for the reforming and saving the world. Which brings me to the

Second thing propounded to speak to from these words, namely to vindicate the wisdom of this design and contrivance of Almighty God, for the salvation of mankind by the sufferings of his son, from the seeming absurdity and unreasonableness of it. But unto them that are called, both *Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.* And,

First,

First, The *Jews* had no sufficient ground, to be so much offended at the sufferings of the *Messias*. For,

I. They had no reason to expect that the *Messias* should be a great temporal Prince, if they had attended to the predictions of their Prophets concerning him, which ought to have been their rule: for they affirm no such thing of him. All that they say of him, plainly refers to a spiritual kingdom, that he should *rule in righteousness*, that he should *preach the Gospel to the poor, and open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf, and make the lame walk*; that he should *finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and make intercession for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness*. So that if they had not entertained a very groundless and carnal conceit concerning him, they could not so widely have mistaken the ancient prophecies of him, which ought to have guided them in these matters, and which they might have seen all plainly fulfilled in the person of our Saviour.

II. The predictions concerning him do most expressly foretel his death and sufferings, and that with very particular circumstances: *David* in the 22d *Psalms*: *Isaiah* quite throughout his 53d Chapter: And *Daniel* does particularly point out the time when he should be cut off. So that they had all the reason in the world to expect that the *Messias*, when he came, should be *despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief*; that he should be *scourged and buffeted, oppressed and afflicted*, and at last *cut off out of the land of the living*. Nay, if it had been otherwise, they had had no reason to have owned him for the true *Messias*.

III. As for signs to evidence him to be the Son of God; though God did not gratify their curiosity as to the nature and manner of them, yet he gave the greatest testimonies that ever were given to any prophet, and abundantly enough to satisfy any reasonable man, that he was a *Teacher come from God*. Indeed his miracles were not generally so prodigious and amazing: but they were many and public, they were useful and beneficial to mankind; and for that reason, more likely to come from God. He did not call for fire from heaven to destroy his enemies; but he gave sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and health to those that were sick of the most dangerous and inveterate diseases, and (which was always reckon'd among the greatest and most undoubted kind of miracles) life to the dead. And when he himself was put to death by the malice of the *Jews*, though he did not *come down from the cross*, and was not rescued from his sufferings by an immediate hand from heaven, to triumph over the malice and cruelty which they were exercising upon him, (which was the miracle they required to be shown) yet God was not wanting to give testimony to him in a most remarkable manner, by prodigies which immediately followed his death; in the strange darkness which came upon the land; in the terrible earthquake which rent the veil of the temple, and tore the rocks asunder; in the opening of the graves, and the rising of the dead; and, *lastly*, in his own miraculous resurrection, the third day after he was crucified: so that here was no sign wanting in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, to convince their obstinacy and unbelief, unless it were that very sign which they demanded. God did enough to satisfy every man's reason; and he is not wont to gratify the humour and curiosity of men. If men be so unreasonable as to expect this from him, God lets such men continue in their wilful blindness and infidelity.

Secondly, Neither had the heathen philosophers reason, upon account of the story of our Saviour's sufferings, to look upon the Gospel as so absurd and unreasonable a thing; as will, I hope, evidently appear, if you will be pleased to consider with me these following particulars:

I. That there is nothing more inculcated in the writings of the wisest and most famous of the heathen philosophers than this, that worldly greatness and prosperity is not to be admir'd, but despised by a truly wise man. *Aristotle* in his *Ethicks*, makes it the property of a magnanimous and great Spirit, *not to admire greatness and power, and victory, and riches*. So that according to their own principles, our Saviour was not to be despised upon account of his meanness and sufferings. He might be a great Prophet, and come from God, though he enjoyed nothing of worldly greatness and prosperity.

II. They

II. They tell us likewise, that men may be very virtuous and good, and dearly beloved of God, and yet be liable to great miseries and sufferings. And to this purpose I could bring you almost innumerable testimonies out of the books of the Philosophers. *Max. Tyrius the Platonist*, speaking of *Ulysses*, says, that *the Gods forced him to wander, and beg, and wear rags, and suffer'd him to be reproach'd and revil'd, for the love and friendship that they bare to him.* *Epietetus*, a poor slave, but inferior to none of all the Philosophers for true virtue and wisdom, thanks the Gods for his mean condition, and says, *He did not believe himself to be one jot the less belov'd by them for that reason; and that he was not cast into a state of poverty and contempt, because the Gods hated him, but that he might be fit to be a witness to others.*

III. They tell us likewise, that a state of affliction and suffering is so far from rendering a man unfit to reform the world, and to be an example of virtue, that none so fit as those that are in such circumstances. *Arrian*, in his dissertations of *Epietetus*, describing a man fit to reform the world, whom he calls, *the Apostle and Messenger, the Minister and Preacher of God to mankind*, gives this Character of him: *He must, says he, be without house and harbour, and destitute of all worldly accommodations; just as it is said of our Saviour, that the Son of Man had not where to lay his head; he must be armed with such a patience by the greatest sufferings, as if he were a stone and devoid of sense; he must be a spectacle of misery and contempt to the world.* And to mention no more, *Plato* in the second book of his *Commonwealth*, when he would represent a righteous man, giving the most unquestionable testimony to the world of his virtue, *Let him, says he, be stript of all things in this world, except his righteousness; let him be poor and diseased, and accounted a wicked and unjust man; let him be whipp'd, and tormented, and crucified as a malefactor; and yet all this while retain his integrity: which does so exactly agree with our Saviour's condition, that had he not wrote before his time, one would have thought he had alluded to it.*

IV. As it seems very convenient, (I am not so bold as to say it was necessary, and that God had no other way to bring about the salvation of men; for what are we, that we should prescribe to God, and set bounds to infinite wisdom?) I say, as it seems very reasonable, that, in order to our salvation, the Son of God, who was the author of it, should become man, both that he might be an example of holiness, and an expiation for sin; and that he should be born after the manner of other men, to satisfy us, that he was really of the same nature with us, that so he might converse more familiarly with us, and might be a more easy, and encouraging, and imitable example of all holiness and virtue; so likewise was it convenient, that he should be subject to the miseries and sufferings of our nature, that by passing through the several states and conditions of humanity, he might have an experimental knowledge of the sufferings that human nature is liable to; and from his own sense of our infirmities, might be a more *merciful and compassionate high-priest*. And this the Apostle expressly takes notice of, *Heb. v.* that it was convenient, that *our High-priest should be taken from among men*, that he might learn to be *compassionate*, by knowing experimentally what it was *to be tempted and afflicted*; the knowledge of experience being the strongest motive and incitement to piety; and consequently to give us the greater assurance of his tender affection to us.

It was of great use, that he should live in so mean and afflicted a condition, to confound the pride, and vanity, and fantasy of the world, and to convince men of these two great truths, that God may love those whom he afflicts, and that men may be innocent, and virtuous, and contented, in the midst of poverty, and reproach, and suffering. Had our blessed Saviour been a great worldly prince, his influence and example might possibly have made more hypocrites and servile converts, but it would not have tended one whit to make men more inwardly good and virtuous. The great arguments that must do this, must be fetched not from the pomp and prosperity of *this* world, but from the happiness and misery of the *other*. Besides, had our Saviour appeared in any great power and splendor, the Christian Religion could not have so clearly been acquitted from the suspicion of a worldly interest and design.

And

And then the Scripture assigns very plain and excellent reasons of his suffering of death, that he might *make expiation for the sins of the whole world*, that he might *take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, and put an end to that troublesome and unreasonable way of worship by Sacrifice, which was in use both among *Jews and Heathens*, and that by *conquering death, and him that had the power of it*, he might *deliver those, who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage*, as the Apostle speaks, *Heb. ii. 14*. For tho' the death of Christ, barely consider'd in it self, be far from an encouragement to us to hope for immortality; yet the death of Christ, consider'd together with his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, is the clearest, and most sensible, and most popular demonstration that ever was in the world, of another life after this, and a blessed Immortality. So that, considering our Saviour rose from the dead, it is far from being ridiculous, to rely upon one that died, for our hopes of Immortality.

V. As for the plainness of our Saviour's doctrine and of the instruments whereby it was propagated, this is so far from being an objection against it, that it is the great commendation of it. It contains a plain narrative of our Saviour's life, and miracles, and death, and resurrection, and ascension into heaven, and a few plain precepts of life; but the most excellent and reasonable, and the freest from all vanity and folly, that are to be met with in any book in the world. And can any thing be more worthy of God, or more likely to proceed from him, than so plain and useful a doctrine as this? Lawgivers do not use to deliver their laws in eloquent language, to set them off with flourish of speech, and to persuade men to a liking of them by subtil and artificial insinuations; but plainly, and in few words, to declare their will and pleasure.

And for the instruments God was pleased to make use of for the publishing of this doctrine, we grant they were generally rude and unlearned men, and our Religion hath no reason to be ashamed of it; for this was very agreeable to the simplicity of the whole design, that all things should be managed in the plainest manner; that Christianity might be introduced in such a way, as there might be no possible suspicion of a human contrivance, or worldly design in it.

The Religion it self was simple and plain, there were no worldly inducements to the embracing of it, but all imaginable discouragements upon that account; the instruments of propagating it were simple and plain men, unassisted by learning or art, by secular power and authority; which is so far from being a disparagement to our Religion, that it is a great reputation to it, and a plain evidence of its divine original, that it was from God, and was countenanced and carried on by him, *not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord*.

And in truth, considering the nature of this doctrine, which consisted either of plain matter of fact, or of easy and familiar precepts, and rules for a good life, the Apostles were as fit for the propagating of it, as any sort of persons in the world: for it did not require depth of understanding, or sharpness of wit to comprehend it, and declare it to others; but honesty and integrity of mind, zeal and industry to promote it; in which qualities the Apostles excell'd the Philosophers and best learned persons in the world: and provided an instrument be sufficient and competent for its end, it matters not how plain and unpolish'd it be; for instruments are not intended for ornaments, but for use. Now the Apostles of our Saviour, though they were illiterate and unbred, were as competent witnesses of matter of fact, as any other persons: for there is no wit and learning required, to relate what a man hath seen and heard. Nay, the more simple and plain, the less eloquent and artificial any relation is, the more likely it is to be true, and to gain belief.

Thus you see, that notwithstanding the seeming unreasonableness and absurdity of the doctrine of the Gospel, it is a most wise and effectual contrivance for the reforming and saving of mankind. *But unto them that are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God.*

The proper inference from all this, is to stir us up to a thankful acknowledgment and admiration of the wisdom and goodness of God, in the salvation of men by *Jesus Christ*. We are most apt to admire that wisdom which finds out such means to an end, as human wisdom would have been least apt to devise, and hit upon; and

and yet the more we consider them, the more we must approve their fitness. Such is the design of the recovery and redemption of mankind, by the death and sufferings of the Son of God. However it may appear to rash and inconsiderate men, who judge superficially, and according to the uppermost appearances of things, to be a very unlikely and improbable design; yet upon a thorough and impartial examination of things, we shall find, that God's way is the wisest, and that in the management of this design, he hath outdone the utmost prudence and wisdom of men, and hath ordered things to infinitely more advantage, than they would have been, in any of those methods which the short and imperfect wisdom of carnal men would have been most apt to pitch upon. Ignorant and conceited and prejudiced men, may censure it for folly; but the Angels, more intelligent and discerning creatures than we are, and of a deeper reach, do look upon it with wonder and astonishment. So the Apostle tells us, 1 Pet. i. 12. where speaking of the Gospel, he calls it *a thing which the Angels desire to look into*. An allusion to the *Cherubims*, who looked earnestly upon the mercy-seat which was over the Ark, as if they would pry into it.

And then let us acknowledge the infinite goodness of God, in saving us by the death and sufferings of his son, us vile and miserable sinners. Had we been the most innocent and righteous, and the dearest friends to him in the world, what could he have done more? How could he possibly have testified greater love to us, than *to give his Son to die for us*? Here is goodness without bounds, love without parallel and example; for *greater love than this hath no man, that a man should lay down his life for his friend*. This is the highest pitch that human affection ever attained to, to die for one's friend: *But herein hath God commended his love to us, that while we were enemies, he gave his Son to die for us*.

This is that which we are to commemorate at this season, and by the commemoration thereof, to prepare ourselves for the receiving of the blessed Sacrament of his body and blood, which was broken and shed for us. The consideration whereof, as it should excite in us a hearty sorrow and repentance for sin, so should it also inflame us with love to Christ, who by suffering such things for us, hath laid upon us an eternal obligation of love and obedience to him. The remembrance of whose death should not only put us into a present fit and passion of grief and love, but should be the ground of lasting affections and resolutions; the thoughts of what he hath done and suffered for us, should make us ambitious to do or suffer any thing for him. What should not we be willing to part with for him, who did not think his own life and his glory dear to him for our sakes? Did he die for us? and shall we think much to live to him? Did he become miserable for our sakes? and shall we think much to become holy and happy for his sake and for our own?

Such affections and holy resolutions the consideration of our Saviour's death and sufferings should be apt to excite in us. What grief, what love, what thankfulness should the remembrance of his dying love work in us! when we consider seriously the many and the mighty blessings and benefits which flow to us out of his wounds, and are taking *the cup of salvation* into our hands, how should *our souls, and all that is within us, bless his holy name, who pardoneth all our iniquities, and healeth all our diseases, who redeemed our life from destruction, and crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercy*. To him, therefore, our gracious and good God, let us give all thanks, adoration and praise. Amen.

S E R M O N CXXXIX.

The Evidence of our Saviour's Resurrection.

ACTS I. 3.

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his Passion, by many infallible Proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

THESSE Words comprehend in short the whole evidence of our Saviour's resurrection, which may be referr'd to these four heads:

First, His appearance to them after his death and passion: *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion.* To whom; that is, to the Apostles whom St. Luke had mentioned just before. *After he had given Commandment to the Apostles, whom he had chosen; to whom also, &c.*

Secondly, The proof of the reality of his appearance: *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, εν πολλοῖς τεκμηριοῖς, idque compluribus argumentis*, saith Erasmus, and that by many certain and undoubted proofs, or arguments.

Thirdly, The duration and continuance of his appearance to them: *Being seen of them forty days.*

Fourthly, The subject matter of his discourse with them: *And speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* Each of these affords us a considerable evidence of Christ's resurrection.

First, His appearance to them after his death and passion: *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion.* In which words there are three things very considerable, and which give great evidence to our Saviour's resurrection.

I. His appearance to his Apostles.

II. That he was really alive, and his body vitally united to his soul.

III. And this after he was really dead, *after his passion*; that is, after he was crucified, dead, and buried, he was raised to life again. I shall speak briefly of these.

I. His appearance to his Apostles: *To whom also he shewed himself alive.* The Apostles are here only mentioned, because this is here spoken of, in order to their designation and appointment to be the witnesses of Christ's resurrection to the world, as the great confirmation of that doctrine which they were to publish: but because I am considering his appearance after his resurrection, as an evidence of the truth of it, I shall therefore take in his appearance to others also of his disciples and followers, and consider likewise, why he only appeared to his own followers, and not also to the unbelieving Jews, who had put him to death, for the full conviction of his enemies and murderers, and the conversion of that whole nation, to whom he was primarily sent.

In considering his several appearances, not only to his Apostles, but to his other disciples and followers, that I may give the shortest and fullest view of them, I shall take them as they are briefly summ'd up by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 4, &c. where, giving an account of the summ of his doctrine among the Corinthians, he tells us, that the foundation of all his preaching was the death and resurrection of Christ. *I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.* And then follows the particular evidence of his resurrection, Ver. 5. *And that he was seen of Cephas.* St. Paul here takes no notice of his first appearance to the devout women, who brought spices and ointments to his sepulchre, Mary Magdalen, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other Women, as we find, Luke xxiv. 10. The reason of which seems to be this, because his first appearance was in consideration of their piety and affection to him, and of the weakness of their sex, their faith being

being liable to be first staggered; and they were only to relate it to the Apostles, and to be honoured with carrying the first news of it, not to be witnesses of it to the world; so that this appearance was only for the private confirmation of their faith, and therefore not particularly taken notice of by St. Paul among the publick evidences of Christ's Resurrection.

He was seen of Cephas. This is mention'd *Luke xxiv. 34. The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.*

St. Paul goes on; and then of the twelve. The College of the Apostles, because their number was twelve by our Saviour's institution, are most frequently called *the Twelve*, though at some meetings some one of them might perhaps be absent: 'tis true there was a short interruption by the miscarriage of Judas, from the time of our Saviour's apprehension to his ascension, and then they are called *the Eleven*, as before, and after they are called *the Twelve*; yea, at this first appearance of our Saviour to them, when they were but *Ten*, Thomas being absent, they are called *the Eleven*, *Mark xvi. 14. He appeared to the Eleven as they sat at meat*; because they were then but *Eleven* in all. And indeed in this text of St. Paul, both the vulgar translation, which certainly follows a very ancient copy, and St. Ambrose there, instead of *Twelve*, render it *Eleven*; so that St. Paul probably means our Saviour's first appearance to them, mentioned by St. Mark, where they are also called *the Eleven*, though Thomas was absent; which is the reason why St. Paul says afterwards at the 7th Verse, that he was seen of all the Apostles, that is, Thomas also being present, as I shall shew by and by.

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once. This was the most solemn appearance of all, mentioned *Matth. xxviii. 10.* and *John xxi. 1.* where our Saviour appointed a general meeting of all his disciples and followers. *Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me. Ver. 16. They went into Galilee into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them.* This mountain, according to the ancient tradition, was mount Thabor.

There is one considerable difficulty concerning the greatness of this number of *five hundred*; namely, that after our Saviour's ascension, we find, *Acts i. 15.* that after their return from mount Olivet (from whence our Saviour ascended) to Jerusalem, the whole number of their meeting was but *an hundred and twenty*, for so it is expressly said, *the number of the names together, were about an hundred and twenty*; that is, of the persons there met. Now we cannot reasonably suppose, that any of those *five hundred*, who had seen him after his Resurrection, were fallen off from them.

For the clear solution of this, it is to be consider'd, that the great meeting of *five hundred* was in Galilee, where our Saviour's residence chiefly had been, and where he had preach'd most constantly, and by consequence he had probably there the greatest number of followers, which was the reason why he chose to appear there, and appointed that place for the general meeting. After which, the Apostles who went thither by our Lord's appointment, together with others who accompanied them from Jerusalem, returned back: but his followers who lived in Galilee remained there; so that there might very well be *five hundred* at the meeting in Galilee, and but *an hundred and twenty* at Jerusalem.

St. Paul goes on, *Verse 7. After that he was seen of James.* This particular appearance of our Lord to St. James, the brother of our Lord, is no where mentioned in the Evangelists. St. Paul probably had it from the common tradition mentioned by St. Jerom, out of the *Hebrew Gospel* of the Nazarenes, in which are several passages omitted by St. Matthew, and this for one; "That our Lord, immediately after he had risen, went and appeared to James: for James had vowed that hour that he drank of the cup of the Lord, (*viz.* in the Sacrament) he would not eat bread, 'till he saw him risen from the dead. The Lord, when he appeared to him, said, bring hither bread and a table, and he took the bread and blessed and brake it, and gave it to James the Just, and said to him, My brother, eat thy bread; for the Son of man is risen from among them that sleep." To this tradition St. Paul probably alludes; but then *επειτα*, which we translate afterwards or then, ought to be render'd, as it elsewhere is, *præterea*, besides, moreover he appeared to James, without denoting the order of the time; for according to this tradition, it was presently after his resurrection, before he had appeared to the other Apostles.

It follows, *Then he was seen of all the Apostles*; that is, by *Thomas*, as well as the rest. And this was his second appearance to the Apostles together; of which *St. Luke* gives us an account, *Luke xxiv. 5.* and *St. John*, Chap. xx. 19.

And last of all, he was, says *St. Paul*, *seen of me also, as an abortive, or one born out of due time.* This he speaks of the appearance of our Lord to him in his way to *Damascus*, whereby he was in a very powerful and extraordinary manner on a sudden converted to Christianity.

Thus I have given you an account of the several appearances of our Saviour, not only to the Apostles, but to others, and have endeavoured to explain the chief difficulties relating to them; so that here is a very plentiful testimony of our Saviour's appearance after his resurrection. I proceed to the

II. Thing here observable, that our Lord was really alive when he thus appeared, and his body vitally united to his soul: *To whom also he shewed himself alive.* To which purpose, there is a remarkable passage in *Ignatius*, in his epistle to the Church of *Smyrna*, out of the same *Hebrew Nazarene Gospel*; "That Christ said to *Peter*, after his resurrection, Behold, touch me, and see that I am not a spirit that have assumed a body." For that was one great objection, that his body was not a real body united to his soul, but a thin airy body, such as are assumed by spectres and apparitions. But the farther evidence of this, I refer to the *second* general head, concerning the proofs of the reality of his appearance. I proceed to the

III. Thing I observed, *viz.* That he appeared alive after he had been really dead: *To whom also he shewed himself alive, after his Passion*, says the text; that is, after he was crucified, and dead, and buried, he was raised and restored to life again. And this likewise is necessary, to evidence the truth and reality of his resurrection, that he was really dead. That this was so, we cannot doubt, whether we consider the malice of the *Jews*, who would take care he should be dead before he was taken from the cross; or the manner of his death, his heart being pierced by the spear, which was evident from the water and blood which came out of his side, which shewed that his heart was mortally wounded; or the time of his being in the grave, which was part of three days. -

And now if he was really dead, his restitution to life, which we call his resurrection, must be miraculous; it being beyond any natural power, that we know of, to effect it.

As for that malicious tradition of the *Jews*, that he was stolen out of his grave by his disciples, while the watch was asleep, and given out to be risen from the dead; besides the undeniable proofs of his resurrection, which I shall produce by and by, the evidence which these suborn'd witnesses gave of his disciples stealing away his body, destroys itself; for they said, *his disciples came by night, and stole him away, while we slept*; which amounts to no more, but that when they awaked, his body was some way or other conveyed or gone out of the grave; which is consistent with his resurrection. But surely none will think fit to give credit to what they testify was done while they were asleep. They are very willing to believe a thing, who will admit of such a deposition.

Thus much concerning our Saviour's appearance to his disciples and followers, after his resurrection. I shall briefly consider, in the

Second Place, why he only appear'd to his own followers, and not also to the unbelieving *Jews*, who had put him to death, for the full conviction of his enemies and murderers, and the conversion of that whole nation to whom he was primarily sent.

Of this matter, so far as is fit for us to enquire into the reason of the divine dispensations, this probable account may be given:

1. It was only of absolute necessity, that those who were to be the first publishers of the Gospel, and the witnesses of his resurrection to the world, should have the utmost evidence and satisfaction concerning the reality of it: others might very soon credit it upon the testimony of so many witnesses, who also gave evidence to the truth of their testimony, by the miracles which they wrought; and of their own sincerity, by dying for this testimony. And thus *St. Peter* takes notice of the reason why our Lord, after his resurrection, did not appear to all the people, but only to select witnesses; because his appearance was necessary only

to those, who were design'd and appointed to be the witnesses of it. If more had been necessary, he must by the same reason have appear'd to all the world; as well as to the Jews: *Acts x. 40, 41. Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, even unto us, who did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the dead; and he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify, &c.*

2. The unbelieving Jews, especially the chief Priests and Rulers, upon whose authority the people depended, were very unworthy, to whom God should afford so extraordinary a way of conviction, who had already despised and rejected so great evidence as was offer'd to them: and not only so, but maliciously imputed the plainest miracles that ever were wrought amongst them, to the power and operation of the Devil. Now if any thing can render men incapable of the favour of farther means of conviction, such a malicious resistance of the evidence which our Saviour's miracles daily wrought among them, carried along with them, would probably do it; especially if we consider, that the greatest of all the miracles which he wrought in his life-time, (I mean, the raising of *Lazarus* from the dead, after he had been dead four days) was so far from convincing them, though they could not deny the thing, that from thence their malice took occasion to resolve to put him to death; *John xi. 47. Then gathered the chief Priests and Pharisees a council, and said, what do we? for this man doth many miracles: if we let him alone, all men will believe on him. And Ver. 53. Therefore from that day they took counsel together to put him to death.* Now was it reasonable that he should appear to them for their conviction, after he was risen from the dead, who maliciously conspired to compass his death, for this very cause, because they knew that he had raised one from the dead?

3. This would have been inconsistent with that just punishment, which God had determined to bring upon the Jewish nation for their obstinate infidelity, and malicious rejection, and cruel usage of the Son of God. After fitting means used for the conviction of men, it is just with God to let men remain in their own obstinate infidelity, and to punish them for it. And it is not to be expected, that God should use violent and irresistible means, to bring such persons to repentance, and to prevent their ruin. He pities the weakness and infirmities of honest minds, and condescends to give them such evidence as it is reasonable to demand, as he did to his disciples: but he hath not thought fit to provide so extraordinary a remedy for wilful and obstinate infidelity; which was the case of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Secondly, We will consider the proofs of the reality of our Saviour's appearance after his resurrection: *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, εν πολλοῖς τεκμηρίοις, by many certain and undoubted proofs or arguments;* for so the words properly signify, as *Quintilian* from *Aristotle* tells us; *τεκμήρια*, says he, are *indubitata & necessaria signa, undoubted and necessary signs of a thing;* as the actions of speaking, walking, eating and drinking, are the *τεκμήρια, undoubted signs of life.*

And these *τεκμήρια*, or undoubted proofs of our Saviour's resurrection, may be referred to these two heads, the natural, and the supernatural and miraculous evidences of the thing.

1. The natural evidence of the thing to their senses; to their eyes, the quickest and surest of senses, men being least apt to be deceived in those things, *quæ sunt oculis commissa fidelibus*, "which are committed to such faithful witnesses, "as our own eyes." He was seen of all his disciples, not once, but several times; not by a transient view and glance, but in a way of the most familiar conversation: he discoursed with them, and did eat and drink with them, and with the same circumstances that he used in his life-time, he gave thanks, and brake bread with them: he suffer'd his body to be touch'd by them, that they might be convinced that it was a real body, consisting of flesh and bones; *Luke xxiv. 39. Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have.*

And to convince them beyond all doubt and scruple, that the very same body was raised in which he had suffer'd, he gives them leave to handle the wounds of his hands and feet; *Luke xxiv. 39. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is myself.*

self. John xx. 20. *He shewed them his hands and his side.* And to Thomas, who was more unbelieving than the rest, he says in the presence of them all, *Ver. 27. Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.* But besides this natural sensible evidence, he gave them likewise,

2. A supernatural and miraculous evidence. St. John mentions *two or three instances*: his coming on the sudden upon them, and *standing in the midst of them, when the doors were shut.* Not that he pass'd through the door with his body, which is not a miracle, but a plain impossibility, and therefore just as fit to countenance *Transubstantiation*, as one impossibility is to prove another: but that he did miraculously open the door, and come in upon them so quickly, as was undiscernable to them; which every man will grant not only to be possible, but easy to the divine power. But this way of our Saviour's conveying himself into the midst of his disciples, though it be also miraculous, yet the Church of Rome will by no means allow it; it is too plain, and easy to be reconcil'd with the nature and possibility of things; they love at their hearts a *lying wonder*, a foppish miracle.

And this miracle was repeated twice; first when Thomas was absent, *John xx. 19.* and when he was present, the same was done again, *Ver. 26.*

And then the miraculous draught of fishes, by which also he had made himself known to them in his life-time.

And then Peter's casting himself into the sea, when he knew it was he, in confidence of that divine power, which in the like kind he had experience of before.

These miracles St. John mentions; but he tells us, *Chap. xx. 30.* that *many other miracles Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, which are not set down in that book.* The

Third thing in the text is, the duration and continuance of his appearing to them, *being seen of them forty days.* And this is of great moment to confirm the reality of the thing: a man may for once be imposed upon by an illusion of fancy, in a thing which he vehemently desires and expects, and which runs strongly in his mind: but where there is time to examine things, and compare all circumstances together, and to look narrowly into them, and to try them by several senses, and at several times for so long a space, it is morally, nay almost naturally impossible, that any one man in his senses, much more so many hundreds of persons, should in such circumstances be grossly deluded in a plain sensible matter of fact.

Fourthly, and lastly, Here is the subject-matter of our Saviour's discourse with his disciples, *concerning things which pertain to the kingdom of God*; or as it is in the Verse before, *after he had by the Holy Ghost (which was not given him by measure, as the Evangelist tells us elsewhere) given commandment to his Apostles, whom he had chosen:* that is, after he had given the full orders and instructions concerning the doctrine which they were to publish, and all other things pertaining to that spiritual kingdom, which he was setting up in the world: by the agreement of all which, with what he had said to them in his life-time, they were more and more confirmed, that it was the very same person whom they had conversed with before, for above three years together. And yet in this discourse concerning his kingdom, he reserved some things to be afterward revealed to them by the Holy Ghost, according as he had promised, *that when the Spirit of truth was come, he should teach them all things*; particularly concerning the spiritual nature of his kingdom, which they did not yet fully understand, as appears by that question which they put to him, *Ver. 6. Lord wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel?* They still dreamed of a temporal kingdom, in which our Saviour would appear in great pomp and splendor, to subdue the world to them.

From all this discourse which I have made, you see what evidence the Apostles, who were to be the first publishers of the Gospel, and witnesses of Christ's resurrection, had of the truth and reality of it; so plentiful, and clear and convincing as nothing more could either be desired or expected. And we have a credible relation of these things brought down to us, abundantly sufficient to satisfy those who are free from the bias of passion or interest, or the prejudice and prepossession of a contrary Religion, in which they have been educated and brought up; and
sufficient

sufficient to gain some few ingenuous and teachable persons here and there, who do more impartially consider things; and though they have been educated in a contrary religion, yet have preserved in themselves a greater freedom of judgment than education does usually leave in the minds of men.

But yet this credible relation of actions and miracles done long ago, how true soever in itself, does not carry so present, and sensible, and strong a conviction with it, as to be able to bear down in the common people, the violent prejudice of education in a contrary religion, and consequently is not likely to do any great matter of itself toward the conversion of infidel nations.

And therefore the divine wisdom, which does nothing that is superfluous and unnecessary, thought fit not only to send the Apostles armed with this evidence, which had abundantly convinced them, to testify the resurrection of Christ to the world, but also to give an immediate testimony to them, by enabling them to work present miracles upon the spot, for the confirmation of their testimony. And this divine power which went along with them, was a sensible testimony and conviction both to the knowing and ignorant part of mankind, that they were teachers and witnesses sent by God; and therefore our Lord commands them, *not to depart from Jerusalem, 'till they had received power from on high*, to qualify them to be witnesses of Christ's resurrection, not only in *Jerusalem*, and *Judæa*, and *Samaria*, but to the utmost parts of the earth.

And this I still believe to be the case of those many nations of the world, that are yet under the violent, and almost invincible prejudice of education in another religion. That which may reasonably satisfy us who are brought up in the Christian Religion, is not likely to be effectual enough to convince them; and therefore, I think it still very credible, that if persons of sincere minds did go to preach the pure Christian Religion, free from those errors and superstitions which have crept into it, to infidel nations, that God would still enable such persons to work miracles, without which there would be little or no probability of success. For as the wisdom of God is not wont to do that which is superfluous, so neither to be wanting in that which is necessary; and though the morality of the Christian Religion be admirable, and very apt to recommend itself to the reason of mankind, yet the doctrine of the death of the Son of God would be such a stumbling-block, as would be hard for them to get over; and the relation of ancient miracles would not easily be admitted, by those who are utterly strangers to our histories of former times; and consequently not so fit to judge of what credit and value they are.

It is not good to be confident where we are not certain; but this I piously believe, that God would extraordinarily countenance such an attempt by all fitting assistance, as he did the first publication of the Gospel; because the reason and necessity is plainly the same in this case, as it was at first. For if God did not think the Apostles naked testimony, unless it were armed with miracles, sufficient for the conviction of the world, concerning the resurrection of Christ, of which themselves had been eye-witnesses, much less can we expect to gain credit, who only carry the relation of these ancient matters of fact, attested by histories to which they are wholly strangers.

And I do strongly hope, that there still remains a great harvest among the *Gentiles*, yet to be gain'd to Christianity before the end of the world; and that the providence of God will, in his own appointed time, make a further step in the conversion of the infidel nations; and that more of the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ; and that yet before the end of all things, the light of the Gospel shall be display'd in a glorious manner, not only in those vast empires of *Tartary*, and *China*, and *Japan*, and *Indostan*, and other great kingdoms of the east, but in the large and dark regions of the new discover'd world; for that solemn promise which God made to his Son, *Psal. ii. 8. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession*, seems to be very far from being yet fully accomplish'd; and since this is like to be the work of some ages, the time perhaps is not far off, when it shall begin: and though I see no sufficient grounds from scripture to believe the personal reign of Christ upon earth for a thousand years; yet it seems to be not improbable, that some time before the end of the world, the
glorious

glorious kingdom of Christ, I mean the prevalency of the pure Christian Religion, should be of as long continuance, as the Reign of *Mahomet* and Anti-Christ have been, both which have now lasted about a thousand years.

For it is clear, that *the fulness of the Gentiles* is not yet *come in*, because the *Jews* still continue dispers'd over the world, which is the mark our Saviour hath given of the call and restitution of the *Jews*, *Luke xxi. 24. They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled:* And thus St. Paul explains to us this prediction of our Saviour, *Rom. xi. 25. I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*

So that this we have reason to expect, and this let us pray for, *That the knowledge of the Lord may fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea; that his ways may be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations;* and with St. Paul, let our hearty desire and prayer for Israel be, *that they may be saved; that there may come out of Sion a deliverer, and he may turn away unrighteousness from Jacob;* especially since St. Paul hath given us reason to hope, that this would be of so great benefit and advantage to the Gentile world, *Rom. xi. 12. If the fall of the Jews be the riches of the world, and the diminution of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?* and *Ver. 15. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world; what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?* Intimating, that as the rejection of the *Jews* was the occasion of publishing the Gospel, that doctrine of reconciliation, to the world, as the same Apostle doth elsewhere call it; so the receiving them to favour again, should be *life from the dead*; that is, a kind of *Resurrection* to the remainder of the Gentile world, who had so long lain in darkness and the shadow of death. Which the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, grant in his due time may be accomplished; that those other sheep which are not yet of this fold, may bear his voice, and be brought in, that there may be one fold, and one shepherd; and all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God.

S E R M O N CXL.

Preach'd at *WHITEHALL*, 1682.

The Possibility of the Resurrection asserted and proved.

ACTS XXVI. 8.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?

THE Resurrection of the Dead, is one of the great articles of the Christian Faith; and yet so it hath happen'd, that this great article of our Religion hath been made one of the chief objections against it. There is nothing that Christianity hath been more upbraided withal, both by the Heathens of old, and by the Infidels of later times, than the impossibility of this article. So that it is a matter of great consideration and consequence, to vindicate our Religion in this particular. For if the thing be evidently impossible, then it is highly unreasonable to propose it to the belief of mankind.

I know that some more devout than wise, and who, it is to be hoped, mean better than they understand, make nothing of impossibilities in matters of faith, and would fain persuade us, that the more impossible any thing is, for that very

Reason is the fitter to be believed; and that it is an argument of a poor and low Faith, to believe only things that are possible; but a generous and heroical Faith will swallow Contradictions, with as much Ease as Reason assents to the plainest and most evident Propositions. *Tertullian*, in the Heat of his Zeal and Eloquence, upon this point of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, lets fall a very odd Passage, and which must have many Grains of Allowance to make it tolerable: *Prorsus credibile est*, (saith he) *quia ineptum est; certam est quia impossibile*: "It is therefore very credible, because it is foolish; and certain, because it is impossible:" "And this (says he) is *neccessarium dedecus fidei*; that is, "it is necessary the Christian Faith should be thus disgrac'd, by the Belief of Impossibilities and Contradictions." I suppose he means, that this Article of the Resurrection was not in itself the less credible, because the Heathen Philosophers cavil'd at it, as a Thing impossible and contradictory, and endeavour'd to disgrace the Christian Religion upon that Account. For had he meant otherwise, that the Thing was therefore credible, because it was really and in itself foolish and impossible: this had been to recommend the Christian Religion, from the Absurdity of the Things to be believed; which would be a strange Commendation of any Religion to the sober and reasonable Part of Mankind.

I know not what some men may find in themselves; but I must freely acknowledge, that I could never yet attain to that bold and hardy degree of Faith, as to believe any Thing for this Reason, because it was impossible: For this would be to believe a Thing to be, because I am sure it cannot be. So that I am very far from being of his Mind, that wanted not only more Difficulties, but even Impossibilities in the Christian Religion, to exercise his Faith upon.

'Tis true indeed, *Abraham*, when he was offering up his Son *Isaac*, is said *against Hope to have believed in Hope*: But he did not believe against a plain Impossibility; for the Apostle to the *Hebrews* expressly tells us, that *He reasoned that God was able to raise him from the Dead*. But had he believed this impossible, he could not have reconciled the Command of God, with his Promise; the Command to *Sacrifice Isaac*, with the Promise which he had made before, That *in his Seed* (which was *Isaac*) *all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*. So that though God was pleased to try his Faith with a great Difficulty, yet with no Impossibility.

I premise all this, to satisfy Men how necessary it is to vindicate the Christian Religion from this Objection, of the Impossibility of any of its Articles. And whatever *Tertullian* might say in a rhetorical Rant, it is very plain, that the ancient Fathers did not think the Resurrection to be a Thing impossible; for then they would never have attempted, as they very frequently do, to have answered the Objections of the Heathens against it, from the pretended Impossibility of it.

To be sure St. *Paul* did not think the Resurrection of the Dead a thing impossible, for then he would never have ask'd that question, *Why should it be thought a Thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?* Nothing being so likely to be thought incredible, and upon so good Reason, as that which is impossible.

Leaving therefore to the Church of *Rome* that Fool-hardiness of Faith, to believe Things to be true, which at the same time their Reason plainly tells them are impossible, I shall at this time endeavour to assert and vindicate this Article of the Resurrection, from the pretended Impossibility of it. And I hope, by God's assistance, to make the Possibility of the Thing so plain, as to leave no considerable Scruple about it, in any free and unprejudiced mind. And this I shall do from these words of St. *Paul*, which are part of the Defence which he made for himself before *Festus* and *Agrippa*; the Substance whereof is this: That he had lived a blameless and inoffensive Life among the *Jews*, in whose Religion he had been bred up; that he was of the strictest Sect of that Religion, a *Pharisee*, which in Opposition to the *Sadduces*, maintained the Resurrection of the Dead, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments in another Life; and that for the Hope of this he was call'd in question, and accused by the *Jews*, Ver. 6, 7. *And now I stand here, and am judged, for the Hope of the Promise made unto the Fathers; unto which Promise, our Twelve Tribes, instantly serving God Day and Night, hope to come; for which Hope sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews*. That is, he was accused for Preaching that *Jesus* was risen from the Dead, which is a particular Instance of the general Doctrine of the Resurrection, which was entertained

by the greatest Part of the *Jews*, and which to the natural Reason of Mankind (however the Heathen in Opposition to the Christian Religion, were prejudiced against it) hath nothing in it that is incredible. And for this he appeals to his Judges, *Festus* and *Agrippa*, *Why should it be thought a Thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?*

Which Words being a Question without an Answer, imply in them these two Propositions:

First, That it was thought by some a Thing incredible, that the Dead should be raised. This is supposed in the Question, as the Foundation of it: For he who asks why a Thing is so, supposeth it to be so.

Secondly, That this Apprehension, that it is a Thing incredible, that God should raise the Dead, is very unreasonable: For the Question being left unanswered, implies its own Answer, and is to be resolved into this Affirmative, That there is no Reason why they, or any Man else, should think it a Thing incredible, that God should raise the Dead.

I shall speak to these two Propositions, as briefly as I can; and then shew, what Influence this Doctrine of the Resurrection ought to have upon our Lives.

First, That it was thought by some a Thing incredible, that God should raise the Dead. This *St. Paul* had Reason to suppose, having from his own Experience found Men so averse from the entertaining of this Doctrine. When he preached to the Philosophers at *Athens*, and declared to them the Resurrection of one *Jesus* from the Dead, they were amazed at this new Doctrine, and knew not what he meant by it, *Acts xvii. 18.* They said, *he seemeth to be a Setter forth of Strange Gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the Resurrection.* He had discoursed to them of the Resurrection of one *Jesus* from the Dead; but this Business of the Resurrection, was a Thing so remote from their Apprehensions, that they had no Manner of Conception of it; but understood him quite in another Sense, as if he had declared to them two new Deities, *Jesus* and *Anastasis*; as if he had brought a new God and a new Goddess among them, *Jesus* and *the Resurrection.* And when he discoursed to them again more fully of this Matter, it is said, *Ver. 32.* that *when they heard of the Resurrection of the Dead, they mocked.* And at the 24th Verse of this 26th Chapter, when he spake of the Resurrection, *Festus* told him, he would hear him no farther, and that he looked upon him as a Man *beside himself, whom much Learning had made mad.* *Festus* looked upon this Business of the Resurrection, as the wild Speculation of a crazy Head. And indeed the Heathens generally, even those who believed the Immortality of the Soul, and another State after this Life, looked upon the Resurrection of the Body as a Thing impossible. *Pliny*, I remember, reckons it among those Things which are impossible, and which God himself cannot do; *Revocare defunctos*, "To call back the Dead to Life." And in the Primitive Times, the Heathen Philosophers very much derided the Christians, upon account of this strange Doctrine of the Resurrection, looking always upon this Article of their Faith, as a ridiculous and impossible Assertion.

So easy is it for Prejudice to blind the Minds of Men, and to represent every Thing to them, which hath a great Appearance of Difficulty in it, as impossible.

But I shall endeavour to shew, that if the Matter be thoroughly examined, there is no Ground for any such Apprehension. I proceed therefore to the

Second Proposition, namely, That this Apprehension, that it is an incredible Thing that God should raise the Dead, is very unreasonable: *Why should it be thought a Thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?* That is, there is no sufficient Reason, why any Man should look upon the Resurrection of the Dead, as a Thing impossible to the Power of God; the only Reason why they thought it incredible, being because they judged it impossible: So that nothing can be vainer, than for Men to pretend to believe the Resurrection; and yet at the same Time to grant it to be a Thing in Reason impossible, because no Man can believe that which he thinks to be incredible; and the Impossibility of a Thing is the best Reason any Man can have to think a Thing incredible. So that the Meaning of *St. Paul's* Question is, *Why should it be thought a Thing impossible, that God should raise the Dead?*

To come then to the Business: I shall endeavour to shew, That there is no sufficient Reason why Men should look upon the Resurrection of the Dead, as a

Thing impossible to God: *Why should it be thought a Thing incredible* (that is, impossible) *with you, that God should raise the Dead?* Which Question implies in it these three Things:

I. That it is above the Power of Nature, to raise the Dead.

II. But it is not above the Power of God, to raise the Dead. And,

III. That God should be able to do this, is by no Means incredible to natural Reason.

I. This Question implies, that it is above the Power of Nature, to raise the Dead; and therefore the Apostle puts the Question very cautiously, *Why should it be thought incredible, that God should raise the Dead?* By which he seems to grant, that it is impossible to any Natural Power to raise the Dead; which is granted on all Hands.

II. But this Question does plainly imply, that it is not above the Power of God to do this. Though the raising of the Dead to Life, be a Thing above the Power of Nature, yet why should it be thought incredible, that God, who is the Author of Nature, should be able to do this? And indeed the Apostle's putting the Question in this Manner, takes away the main Ground of this Objection against the Resurrection, from the Impossibility of the Thing. For the main Reason, why it was looked upon as impossible, was, because it was contrary to the Course of Nature, that there should be any return from a perfect Privation to a Habit, and that a Body perfectly dead should be restored to Life again: But for all this, no Man that believes a God, who made the World, and this Natural Frame of Things, but must think it very reasonable to believe, that he can do Things far above the Power of any Thing that he hath made.

III. This Question implies that it is not a Thing incredible to natural Reason, that God should be able to raise the Dead. I do not say, that by natural Light we can discover that God *will* raise the Dead; for that depending merely upon the Will of God, can no otherwise be certainly known than by Divine Revelation: But that God *can* do this, is not at all incredible to natural Reason. And this is sufficiently implied in the Question which St. Paul asks, in which he appeals to Festus and Agrippa, neither of them Christians, *Why should it be thought a Thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?* And why should he appeal to them concerning the Credibility of this Matter, if it be a Thing incredible to natural Reason?

That it is not, I shall first endeavour to prove, and then to answer the chief Objections against the Possibility of it.

And I prove it thus: It is not incredible to natural Reason, that God made the World, and all the Creatures in it; that Mankind is *his Offspring*; and that *he gives us Life and Breath, and all Things*. This was acknowledged and firmly believed by many of the Heathens. And indeed, whoever believes that the Being of God may be known by natural Light, must grant, that it may be known by the natural Light of Reason, that God made the World; because one of the chief Arguments for the Being of a God, is taken from those visible Effects of Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, which we see in the Frame of the World. Now he that can do the greater, can undoubtedly do the less; he that made all Things of Nothing, can much more raise a Body out of the Dust; he who at first gave Life to so many inanimate Beings, can easily restore that which is dead to Life again. It is an excellent Saying of one of the Jewish Rabbies: "That he who made that which was not, to be, can certainly make that which once was, to be again." This hath the Force of a Demonstration; for no Man that believes that God hath done the one, can make any Doubt, but that he can if he please do the other.

This seems to be so very clear, that they must be strong Objections indeed, that can render it incredible.

There are but *two* that I know of, that are of any Consideration, and I shall not be afraid to represent them to you with their utmost Advantage; and they are these:

First, Against the Resurrection in general: It is pretended impossible, after the Bodies of Men are resolved into Dust, to recollect all the dispersed Parts, and bring them together, to be united into one Body.

The *Second* is levell'd against the Resurrection in some particular Instances, and pretends it to be impossible in some Cases only, *viz.* When that which was the

Matter of one Man's Body, does afterwards become the Matter of another Man's Body; in which Case, say they, it is impossible that both these should, at the Resurrection, each have their own Body.

The Difficulty of both these Objections, is perfectly avoided by those who hold, that it is not necessary that our Bodies at the Resurrection should consist of the very same Parts of Matter that they did before; there being no such great Difference between one Parcel of Dust and another; neither in respect of the Power of God, which can as easily command *this* Parcel of Dust as *that*, to become a living Body, and being united to the Soul, to rise up and walk: So that the Miracle of the Resurrection will be all one in the main, whether our Bodies be made of the very same Matter they were before, or not. Nor will there be any Difference as to us; for whatever Matter our Bodies be made of, when they are once re-united to our Souls, they will be then as much our own, as if they had been made of the very same Matter of which they consisted before. Besides that, the Change which the Resurrection will make in our Bodies, will be so great, that we could not know them to be the same, though they were so.

Now upon this Supposition, which seems Philosophical enough, the Force of both these Objections is wholly declined. But there is no need to fly to this Refuge; and therefore I will take this Article of the Resurrection in the strictest Sense, for the raising of a Body to Life, consisting of the same individual Matter that it did before; and in this Sense, I think it hath generally been received by Christians, not without Ground from Scripture. I will only mention one Text, which seems very strongly to imply it, *Rev. xx. 13. And the Sea gave up the Dead which were in it; and Death and the Grave deliver'd up the Dead which were in them; and they were judged every Man according to his Works.* Now why should the Sea and the Grave be said to deliver up their Dead, if there were not a Resurrection of the same Body; but any Dust form'd into a living Body, and united to the Soul, would serve the Turn? We will therefore take it for granted, that the very same Body shall be raised. And I doubt not even in this Sense, to vindicate the Possibility of the Resurrection from both these Objections.

First, Against the Resurrection in general of the same Body; it is pretended impossible, after the Bodies of Men are moulder'd into Dust, and by infinite Accidents have been scatter'd up and down the World, and have undergone a Thousand Changes, to recollect and rally together the very same Parts of which they consisted before. This the Heathens used to object to the Primitive Christians; for which Reason they also used to burn the Bodies of the Martyrs, and to scatter their Ashes in the Air, to be blown about by the Wind, in Derision of their Hopes of a Resurrection.

I know not how strong Malice might make this Objection to appear; but surely in Reason it is very weak: For it wholly depends upon a gross Mistake of the Nature of God and his Providence, as if it did not extend to the smallest Things; as if God did not know all Things that he hath made, and had them not always in his View, and perfectly under his Command; and as if it were a Trouble and Burden to infinite Knowledge and Power, to understand and order the least Things: Whereas infinite Knowledge and Power can know and manage all Things, with as much Ease, as we can understand and order any one Thing.

So that this Objection is grounded upon a low and false Apprehension of the Divine Nature, and is only fit for *Epicurus* his Herd, who fancied to themselves a sort of slothful and unthinking Deities, whose Happiness consisted in their Laziness, and a Privilege to do nothing. I proceed therefore to the

Second Objection, which is more close and pressing; and this is levell'd against the Resurrection in some particular Instances. I will mention but *two*, by which all the rest may be measur'd and answered.

One is, of those who are drowned in the Sea, and their Bodies eaten up by Fishes, and turn'd into their Nourishment; and those Fishes perhaps eaten afterwards by Men, and converted into the Substance of their Bodies.

The other is of the *Canibal*; some of whom, as credible Relations tell us, have lived wholly, or chiefly of the Flesh of Men; and consequently the whole, or the greatest Part of the Substance of their Bodies is made of the Bodies of other Men. In these and the like Cases, wherein one Man's Body is supposed to be turned into the

the Substance of another Man's Body, how should both these at the Resurrection, each recover his own Body? So that this Objection is like that of the *Sadduces* to our Saviour, concerning a Woman that had seven Husbands, they ask, *Whose Wife of the seven shall she be at the Resurrection?* So here, when several have had the same Body, Whose shall it be at the Resurrection? And how shall they be supplied that have it not?

This is the Objection; and in order to the answering of it, I shall premise these *two* Things:

I. That the Body of Man is not a constant and permanent Thing, always continuing in the same State, and consisting of the same Matter: But a successive Thing, which is continually spending, and continually renewing itself, every Day losing something of the Matter which it had before, and gaining new; so that most Men have new Bodies, oftener than they have new Cloaths; only with this Difference, that we change our Cloaths commonly at once, but our Bodies by Degrees.

And this is undeniably certain from Experience. For so much as our Bodies grow, so much new Matter is added to them, over and besides the repairing of what is continually spent; and after a Man be come to his full Growth, so much of his Food as every Day turns into Nourishment, so much of his Yesterday's Body is usually wasted, and carried off by insensible Perspiration, that is, breathed out at the Pores of his Body; which, according to the *Statick* Experiment of *Sanctorius* a Learned Physician, who for several Years together weighed himself exactly every Day, is (as I remember) according to the Proportion of Five to Eight, of all that a Man eats and drinks. Now according to this Proportion, every Man must change his Body several Times in a Year.

'Tis true indeed, the more solid Parts of the Body, as the Bones, do not change so often as the fluid and fleshy; but that they also do change, is certain, because they grow, and whatever grows is nourish'd and spends, because otherwise it would not need to be repair'd.

II. The Body which a Man hath at any Time of his Life, is as much his own Body, as that which he hath at his Death; so that if the very Matter of his Body, which a Man had any Time of his Life, be raised, it is as much his own and the same Body, as that which he had at his Death, and commonly much more perfect; because they who die of lingering Sickness, or old Age, are usually mere Skeletons when they die; so that there is no Reason to suppose, that the very Matter of which our Bodies consist at the Time of our Death, shall be that which shall be raised; that being commonly the worst, and most imperfect Body of all the rest.

These *two* Things being premised, the Answer to this Objection cannot be difficult. For as to the more solid and firm Parts of the Body, as the Skull and Bones, 'tis not I think pretended that the *Canibals* eat them: and if they did, so much of the Matter, even of these solid Parts, wastes away in a few Years, as being collected together would supply them many times over. And as for the fleshy and fluid Parts, these are so very often changed and renewed, that we can allow the *Canibals* to eat them all up, and to turn them all into nourishment, and yet no Man need contend for want of a Body of his own at the Resurrection, *viz.* any of those Bodies which he had ten or twenty Years before; which are every whit as good, and as much his own, as that which was eaten.

You will pardon me, I hope, that I have dwelt so long upon so contentious an Argument, when you consider how necessary what I have said is to the vindicating of so great an Article of our Religion; and especially in this evil Age of Unbelief, when greater Matters than this are called in Question.

Having thus shewn that the Resurrection is not a Thing incredible to natural Reason, I should now proceed to shew the Certainty of it from Divine Revelation. For as Reason tells us, it is not impossible; so the Word of God hath assur'd us, that it is certain. The Texts of Scripture are so many and clear to this Purpose, and so well known to all Christians, that I will produce none. I shall only tell you, that as it is expressly revealed in the Gospel, so our blessed Saviour, for the Confirmation of our Faith, and the Comfort and Encouragement of our Hope, hath given us the Experiment of it in his own Resurrection, which is *the Earnest and First-fruits of ours.* So St. Paul tells us, that *Christ is risen from the dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept.* And that Christ did really rise from the dead,

we have as good Evidence, as for any ancient Matter of Fact which we do most firmly believe; and more and greater Evidence than this, the Thing is not capable of; and because it is not, no reasonable Man ought to require it.

Now what remains, but to conclude this Discourse with those practical Inferences which our Apostle makes from this Doctrine of the Resurrection; and I shall mention these *two*:

The *First*, for our Support and Comfort under the Infirmities and Miseries of this mortal Life.

The *Second*, for the Encouragement of Obedience and a good Life.

I. For our Comfort and Support under the Infirmities and Miseries of this mortal State. The Consideration of the glorious Change of our Bodies at the Resurrection of the Just, cannot but be a great Comfort to us, under all bodily Pain and Sufferings:

One of the greatest burdens of Human Nature, is the Frailty and Infirmary of our Bodies, the Necessities they are frequently press'd withal, the manifold Diseases they are liable to, and the Dangers and Terrors of Death, to which they are continually subject and enslaved. But the Time is coming, if we be careful to prepare ourselves for it, when we shall be cloathed with other kind of Bodies, free from all these Miseries and Inconveniencies which Flesh and Blood is subject to. *For these vile Bodies shall be changed and fashioned like to the glorious Body of the Son of God.* When our Bodies shall be raised to a new Life, they shall become incorruptible; *For this Corruptible must put on Incorruption, and this Mortal must put on Immortality; and then shall come to pass the Saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in Victory.* When this last Enemy is conquer'd, there shall be no *fleshy Lusts*, nor brutish Passions, *to fight against the Soul; no Law in our Members, to war against the Law of our Minds;* no Disease to torment us, no danger of Death to amaze and terrify us. Then all the Passions and Appetites of our outward Man shall be subject to the Reason of our Minds, and our Bodies shall partake of the Immortality of our Souls. It is but a very little while, that our Spirits shall be crush'd, and clogg'd with these heavy and sluggish Bodies: At the Resurrection they shall be refined from all Dregs of Corruption, and become *Spiritual, and Incorruptible, and Glorious*, and every way suited to the Activity and Perfection of a glorified Soul, and *the Spirits of just Men made perfect.*

II. For the Encouragement of Obedience and a good Life. Let the belief of this great Article of our Faith have the same Influence upon us, which St. Paul tells us it had upon him, *Acts xxiv. 15, 16. I have hope towards God, that there shall be a Resurrection of the Dead, both of the just and unjust; and herein do I exercise myself, always to have a Conscience void of Offence, towards God and towards Men.* The firm Beliefe of a Resurrection to another Life, should make every one of us very careful how we demean ourselves in this Life, and afraid to do any Thing, or to neglect any Thing, that may defeat our Hopes of a blessed Immortality, and expose us to the extreme and endless misery of Body and Soul in another Life.

Particularly, it should be an Argument to us, *to glorify God in our Bodies, and in our Spirits;* and to use *the Members* of the one, and *the Faculties* of the other, as *Instruments of Righteousness, unto Holiness.* We should reverence ourselves, and take heed, not only how we defile our Souls by sinful Passions, but how we dishonour our Bodies by sensual and brutish Lusts; since God hath designed so great an Honour and Happiness for both at the Resurrection.

So often as we think of a blessed Resurrection to eternal Life, and the happy Consequences of it; the Thoughts of so glorious a Reward should make us diligent and unwearied in the Service of so good a Master, and so great a Prince, who can and will prefer us to infinitely greater Honours, than any that are to be had in this World. This Inference the Apostle makes from the Doctrine of the Resurrection, *1 Cor. xv. 58. Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

Nay, we may begin this blessed State while we are upon Earth, by *settling our Hearts and Affections upon the Things that are above, and having our Conversations in Heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile Bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all Things to himself.*

Now the God of Peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us always that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be Glory for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N CXLII.

The Resurrection of our Saviour consider'd, as
an Argument for seeking Things above.

COL. iii. 1, 2.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God. Set your Affections on Things above; not on Things on the Earth.

THE Apostle in this Epistle (as his manner is in all the rest) having laid the Doctrine of the Gospel for a Foundation, and endeavoured to rectify some Errors, both in Doctrine and Practice, which the Christians, at *Colosse* were seduced into, by the Guile and Arts of False Teachers and Apostles, as particularly the *Worship of Angels*, and out of a Pretence of *Humility*, addressing themselves to God by their Mediation, which is the particular Scope and Design of this Epistle: The Apostle, I say, having in the former Part of it, endeavoured to set them right in this Matter, and to establish their Minds in the Faith and Doctrine of Christ; in the latter Part of it, exhorts them to a Conversation answerable to the Doctrine of Christ, to a Holy and Heavenly Life; at the beginning of this Third Chapter: *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek the Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God. Set your Affections on Things above; not on Things on the Earth.*

This Inference is drawn from what he had said at a good Distance before, namely, at the 12th Verse of the former Chapter, *Being buried with him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the Faith of the Operation of God, who hath raised him from the Dead. Being buried with him in Baptism.* For the full understanding of this Expression, we must have recourse to that parallel Text, *Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5.* which will explain to us the meaning of this Phrase. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his Death? Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was raised up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in Newness of Life. For if we have been planted together in the Likeness of his Death, we shall be also in the Likeness of his Resurrection.* Where we see, that to be baptized into the Death and Resurrection of Christ, is to be baptized into the Similitude and Likeness of them; and the Resemblance is this; that as Christ being dead was buried in the Grave, and after some Stay in it, that is, for three Days, he was raised again out of it, by the glorious Power of God, to a new and heavenly Life, being not long after taken up into Heaven to live at the Right Hand of God; so Christians, when they were baptized, were immers'd into the Water three times, their Bodies being covered all over with it; which is therefore call'd, our being buried with him by Baptism into Death; and after some short stay under Water, were raised or taken up again out of it, as if they had been recovered to a new Life; by all which was spiritually signified, our dying to Sin, and being raised to a Divine and Heavenly Life, through the Faith of the Operation of God; that is, by that Divine and Supernatural Power, which raised up Christ from the Dead. So that Christians from thenceforth were to reckon themselves dead unto Sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ, as the Apostle speaks, *Rom. vi. 11.*

Now

Now upon this ground, that we are *buried with Christ in Baptism*, and *risen with him to a new and heavenly Life*, the Apostle founds the Exhortation in the Text, *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek the Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God. Set your Affections on things above; not on things on the Earth.* So that the Words are an earnest Exhortation to a Divine Life, and a Spiritual and Heavenly Conversation. In which there are *two Things* to be considered:

First, The Duty we are exhorted to, which is heavenly-mindedness. *Seek the Things which are above; and Set your Affections on Things above.*

Secondly, The Arguments by which the Apostle urgeth and presseth this Exhortation. *If ye be risen with Christ, seek the Things which are above; and Seek the Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God.* So that my Work will be,

First, To shew the Nature of the Duty, to which we are exhorted. And,

Secondly, The Force of the Arguments, which are used to persuade us to it.

First, For the Nature of the Duty to which we are exhorted; and it is expressed both Affirmatively and Negatively.

1. Affirmatively; and the Apostle useth *two* several expressions. *Seek the Things which are above; and, Set your Affections on Things above.*

2. Negatively; *And not on Things on the Earth.* And this seems to be added, not only to explain and ascertain the Object, and to add Vehemence and Earnestness to the Exhortation; but likewise to set off the Excellency of the Object, by way of Opposition and Comparison. *On the Things that are above; and not upon those pitiful and inferior Things, which are upon the Earth.* And likewise to shew the Inconsistency of these, and the Impossibility of seeking and setting our Affections upon both in an intense degree. For that would be to have two chief Ends, *to love God and Mammon; to serve two Masters*, which our Saviour hath told us is impossible. But this I shall use afterwards, as an Argument to enforce the Exhortation.

To explain the Nature of this Duty, I shall consider the Act, and the Object.

I. For the Act, here are *two* Words used to express it, *ζητεῖτε* and *προσέχετε*, *seek* and *set your Affections*; and in these *two* Words, these *four* Things seem to be comprehended; an Act of our Understandings about these Things; the Ardency of our Affections; and the Activity of our Endeavours in the Pursuit of them; and a clear Preference of the Things which are above, to the Things of the Earth, when they come in competition. For these two Words do comprehend, not only the Power of our Understandings, and Wills, and Affections, and an earnest Attention and Application of Mind to these Things; but the Activity of our Endeavours about them.

1. Here is implied an Act of our Understandings, that we should mind and think upon these Things, that we should often consider them, and meditate upon them; that Heaven should be much in our Thoughts, and the Glory and Excellency of that State, which we hope to attain to, and by what Ways and Means we may come to be made Partakers of that blessed Inheritance.

2. It implies likewise an Act of our Affections; that we heartily love and desire the Things that are above, with that Ardency and Vehemency of Affection, which is proportionable to the Worth and Excellency of them. And both these are included in the Word *προσέχετε*, which is sometimes translated *to mind*, sometimes *to set our Affections upon a Thing*.

3. Activity and Industry in the Prosecution of these Things, if by any Means we may attain them. And this is implied in the Word *ζητεῖτε*, *seek the Things which are above.* When we know there are such Treasures in Heaven, so great a Reward laid up for good Men, *Joys so unspeakable and full of Glory*, and when our Understandings have dwelt so long upon these Things, as to work upon our Affections, these, like so many Springs of Motion, will set our Endeavours on Work, for the obtaining of what we so much love and desire, and will make us inquisitive, with the young Man in the Gospel, *What good Thing we shall do, that we may inherit eternal Life*; by what means we may best secure our Title to Heaven and Happiness; and very industrious to acquire those Qualities and Dispositions, which will fit us for Heaven, and the blessed Sight and Enjoyment of God; nay, by which we may begin this happy State here, by our Conversation in Heaven, whilst we are sojourning here below, as *Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth.*

4. It

4. It implies a clear Preference of the Things above, to the Things of the Earth, when they come in Competition. And in this Sense the Word *φρονεῖν* is observed to be used in good Authors, for taking Part with, and adhering to one Side, when two Parties or Interests come in Competition. And indeed this Phrase and Form of Speech, when the Thing is express'd affirmatively and negatively, is very often used by way of Comparison, when two Things come in Competition. *Lay not up for yourselves Treasures upon Earth: but lay up for yourselves Treasures in Heaven. Labour not for the Meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to Eternal Life.* So here: *Set your Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth.* When Heaven and Earth come in Competition, the Happiness of the next Life, and the Enjoyments of this, the Interest of your Souls, and of your Bodies, *the Things which are not seen, and are eternal, and the Things which are seen, and are but Temporal,* a Holy, and Heavenly, and virtuous Life, and a sensual and sinful Course, *choose the better Part;* stick to that which is the true and lasting Interest; prefer Heaven before Earth, and the care of your Souls, to that of your Bodies, Things Eternal, to Things Temporal, and a Holy and Virtuous Life which leads to Heaven, to those sinful and vicious Practices which will sink Men into Perdition. For that this also the Apostle means by *Things on the Earth*, sinful Lusts and Practices, seems very probable, from what follows at *Ver. 5. Mortify therefore your Members which are upon the Earth.*

II. Let us consider the Object of this Act, what it is that we are to seek and set our Affections upon; and that is *the Things which are above.*

1. The glorious God and Father of all, and his blessed and eternal Son our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the Holy Spirit of God; these are the great Objects of our Contemplation and Adoration. And then the holy Angels, and *the Spirits of just Men made perfect*, who are Examples to us, of doing the Will of God here on Earth, as it is done by them in Heaven.

2. The blessed State and Condition which we aspire after in the next Life, with all the Joys and Glories of it, *such as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man.*

3. The Dispositions to be acquired, and the Actions and Duties to be performed by us, as necessary Qualifications and Means for the obtaining of this Happiness, and bringing us to the Possession of it; all these are comprehended in the Latitude of the Object, *the Things which are above.*

And to seek, and mind, and set our Affections upon these, is to do those Things, which the Consideration of each of these respectively calls for; so to meditate on God and mind him, as to fear, and love, and serve him; to seek his Glory as our last End, and the Enjoyment of him as our chief Good; to seek his Favour above all Things, and to sue to him as the Fountain of all Grace, and *the Giver of every good and perfect Gift*, and of all Blessings Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal, by the powerful Intercession of his Son, the great and only Mediator between God and Man, to be obtain'd for us, and to be wrought in us, by the powerful Virtue and Operation of the Holy Spirit. So to mind the Angels and blessed Saints above, as to aspire after their Society, by imitating their Virtues, and *being Followers of those, who through Faith and Patience have inherited the Promises.* So to meditate on our future Blessedness, as to raise our Hearts and Affections above this World, and effectually to engage us to fit ourselves for that blessed State and Condition, that we may be *meet to be made Partakers of that glorious Inheritance.* And Lastly, so to mind all the Duties and Means necessary and conducing to our Salvation, as effectually to perform them; to order our Lives and all the Actions of them, with a Regard to Eternity; in a word, to omit and neglect nothing that may further and promote the great Design of our eternal Salvation, and to do nothing that may contradict or hinder it. This is to seek and set our Affections upon the Things that are above. And thus I have done with the first Thing I propounded, the Nature of the Duty which we are exhorted to. I proceed to the

Second Thing I propounded, which was to consider the Force of the Arguments, which are used to persuade us to it. Here are three Arguments in the Text to this Purpose; two of them are express, and the Third of them implied.

I. *If ye be risen with Christ, seek the Things which are above.*

II. *Seek the Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God.*

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III. The transcendent and incomparable Excellency of the Things above, in Comparison of earthly Things. This is intimated in the Opposition, *set your Affections on the Things which are above; and not on Things on the earth.* I shall briefly shew the force of each of these Arguments.

I. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek the Things which are above.* That is, if ye believe his Resurrection, if ye will be conformed to him in it, if ye be made Partakers of the Power and Virtue of it.

1. If ye believe the Resurrection, of Christ. The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, was the great Seal of his Ministry, and Confirmation of his Doctrine: and one great Branch of his Doctrine was Heavenly-mindedness, that we should *lay up for our selves Treasures in Heaven*, because *where our Treasure is, there will our Hearts be also*, that we should *first seek the Kingdom of God, and the Righteousness thereof.*

2. If we will bear a Conformity and Resemblance to him in his Resurrection. He is our great Pattern and Example which the Gospel propounds to us; and that we may have the nearer Conformity to him, the Apostle doth not only propose the Virtues of his Life to our Imitation, but where we cannot literally imitate him, the Apostle urgeth Spiritual Conformity that those Things which he did and suffered in his Body, we should do and suffer spiritually; as Christ *died for Sin*, so we should *die to Sin*; as he literally *rose again from the Dead*, so in Conformity to him, we should be spiritually *raised to Newness of Life.* *As he ascended into Heaven*, so we should *ascend thither also in our Hearts and Affections.* Col. ii. 12. *Buried with him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, thro' the Faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the Dead.* Rom. vi. 4, 5. *Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was raised up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in Newness of life.* For if we have been planted together in the Likeness of his Death, we shall be also in the Likeness of his Resurrection. To be raised from the Dead, is in order to a new Life. So the Apostle tells us, *Ver. 9, 10, 11. Knowing that Christ being raised from the Dead, dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto Sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God, Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto Sin: but alive unto God, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.* As the Resurrection of Christ was in order to a better and happier Life, to his Ascension into Heaven, and his living with God: So in Conformity to Christ, our Spiritual Resurrection should be in order to a Heavenly and Divine Life. And what is the Meaning of all this? But that Men are apt to imitate those whom they love, and do affect to resemble them as much as they can. And therefore to endear our Duty to us, the Mortification of our Lusts, and a Holy Life, the Apostle tells us, that hereby we bear a Conformity to Christ, the great Object of our Love and Imitation.

3. If ye be made Partakers of the Power and Virtue of his Resurrection. The Resurrection of Christ is not only a pattern, but hath a Power and Efficacy in it, to raise us to a Spiritual and Heavenly Life. When Christ rose, he did not rise alone, but many of the Bodies of the Saints who were dead rose with him, to signify to us the Power of his Resurrection. It communicated a Virtue to those who had an Interest in the Merits of his Death and Sufferings. whereby they are enabled to live a new and heavenly Life. *John xi. 25. I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, tho' he were dead, yet shall he live.* Eph. i. 19. *And what is the exceeding Greatness of his Power to us-ward, who believe, according to the Working of his mighty Power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the Dead.* Phil. iii. 10, 11. *That I may know him, and the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Sufferings, being made conformable unto his Death; if by any Means I may attain the Resurrection from the Dead.* Col. ii. 13. *And you being dead in your Sins, and the Uncircumcision of your Flesh, hath he quicken'd together with him.* Now this Power is derived to us by believing on him, who raised up Jesus from the Dead, that he is also able to raise us, who are dead in Trespasses and Sins, to a Divine and Heavenly Life. The

IIId. Argument is contained in these Words, *Seek the Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God.* Which Words do declare to us the Exaltation of Christ's human Nature, and his being advanced to be the King and Governor of his Church, having all Power and Judgment committed to him. Luke

xxiv. 26. Christ's Ascension, and his sitting at the Right Hand of God, is called, *His entering into his Glory? Ought ye not to have suffer'd these Things, and then to enter into his Glory?* That is, to be invested with all Power and Authority for the Good of the Church. But most particularly the Apostle describes this, *Eph. i. 20, 21, 22. And set him at his own Right Hand in heavenly Places, far above all Principalities, and Powers, and Might, and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but that which is to come; and hath put all Things under his Feet, and given him to be Head over all Things to the Church.*

And now the Force of this Argument is from the Relation that is between the Head and the Members, between Christ and Christians. The Members have an Affection for the Head, which makes them aspire Heavenwards; and the Head hath an Influence upon the Members. *If I be lifted up from the Earth,* says our Lord, *I will draw all Men unto me.* This is spoken of his Crucifixion, signifying what Death he should die, as the Text tells us, *John xii. 32, 33.* But it is proportionably true of his Ascension, and sitting at the Right Hand of God; for there is a Power and Virtue in the Resurrection of Christ, and in his Ascension into Heaven, as well as in his Death, to draw all Men to him. The Gift of God's Holy Spirit is the Fruit of his Ascension and Exaltation *at the Right Hand of the Majesty on high:* And 'tis by the powerful Operation of the Spirit of God upon our Hearts, that we are raised to Newness of Life, and our Affections fix'd upon Heavenly Things. We are naturally bowed down to the Earth, and inclined to the Things of this World, *Curvæ in Terris animæ, & Cælestium inanes;* but our glorified Saviour sitting at the Right Hand of God, by the Power of his Spirit, draws our Affections to him. The

III^d and last Argument, which is but implied in the Text, is the transcendent and incomparable Excellency of Heavenly Things, above Things on the Earth, which the Apostle intimates by the Opposition, *Set your Affection on Things above; not on Things on the Earth.* Earthly Things are perishing and transitory, gross and unsatisfactory, and cannot be the Felicity of an immortal Soul, being neither suited to the spiritual Nature, nor to the immortal Duration of our Souls: they can neither satisfy us while we live, nor preserve us from Death, nor comfort us in it, nor accompany us into the other World, nor contribute any Thing to our Happiness there; and if they can do nothing towards our Happiness, why should we set our Hearts upon them? They that seek for Happiness in Earthly Things, are like the Women sitting over our Saviour's Sepulchre, with their Faces bowed down to the Earth; they *seek the living among the dead:* Our Happiness is not here, 'tis risen, 'tis above. Let our Hearts ascend thither, where our Happiness and our Treasure is. Why should we bestow our Affections upon these low and mean Things, when there are incomparably better Objects to fix them upon?

The Inference from all this shall be to engage and persuade us by all these Arguments and Considerations, *to seek and mind the Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God; and to have our Conversation there, where our Saviour is, and from whence also we look for him again, to change these vile Bodies, that they may be made like unto his glorious Body, according to the working of that mighty Power, whereby he is able to subdue all Things to himself.* Let all our Actions have Relation to another World, and our Conversation declare, that we are *mindful of another Country, that is a heavenly.* Is Christ our Head risen and ascended into Heaven? Let us in our Hearts and Affections follow him thither, and patiently wait 'till he receive our Souls, and raise our Bodies, and take us wholly to himself, that we may be *for ever with the Lord.*

The Resurrection of Christ is a Demonstration of a future State after this Life, and a Pledge of a blessed Immortality in another World. For our Lord by his Resurrection from the dead, hath conquer'd Death, and abolished it, and brought Life and Immortality to light. He is the *First-fruits of them that slept,* and his Resurrection is an Earnest and Assurance of ours; and from thence the Apostle makes this Inference, *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* The Belief of a future State after this Life, should put us upon the most earnest and vigorous Endeavours to secure this happy Condition to ourselves; *If by any means, as the Apostle expresseth it, we may attain the*

Resurrection of the Dead. It should raise us above the World and the Lusts of it, above all the Terrors and Temptations of it.

As on the one hand, the serious Thoughts of our Mortality should check our eager Pursuit of this World; so on the other hand, the Belief of a Life to come should quicken our Endeavours for the obtaining it: Seeing we hope for so happy a State, we should prepare ourselves for it by Purity, and Holiness of Heart and Life, by Perseverance, and a *patient Continuance in well-doing.* *What manner of Persons ought we to be, in all holy Conversation and Godliness, who have such Hopes and Expectations? Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.* Now that *Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Gospel*, what greater, what other design can any Man propose to himself, than to be happy for ever? For such a Prize, who would not strive, and run, and take any Pains? Who would not deny himself *the Pleasures of Sin, which are but for a season*; resist Temptations, and conflict with Difficulties, and *glory in Tribulations and Sufferings*, and be constant and faithful to the Death, in hope of that eternal Life, which God that cannot lie hath promised?

In our Pursuit of the Things of this World, we usually prevent Enjoyment, by Expectation; we anticipate our own Happiness, and eat out the Heart and Sweetness of worldly Pleasures, by delightful Forethoughts of them; so that when we come to possess them, they do not answer the Expectation, nor satisfy the Desires which were raised about them, and they vanish into nothing: But the Things which are above, are so great, so solid, so durable, so glorious, that we cannot raise our Thoughts to an equal Height with them; we cannot enlarge our Desires beyond a Possibility of Satisfaction. Our Hearts are greater than the World; but God is greater than our Hearts; and the Happiness which he hath laid up for us, is like himself, incomprehensibly great and glorious. Let the Thoughts of this raise us above this World, and inspire us with greater Thoughts and Designs, than the Care and Concernments of this present Life.

We all profess most firmly to believe, that after a few Days we shall leave this World, and all the Enjoyments of it, and go to the Place from whence we shall not return; that we shall enter upon an unchangeable State of Happiness or Misery, according as we have demean'd ourselves in this present Life; that great Care and Diligence is necessary to *work out our own Salvation*; that there must be a great Preparation of ourselves, by unspotted Purity of Heart and Life, to make ourselves meet for an Inheritance with them that are sanctified; that we must labour, and strive, and run, and fight, and give all Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure; that we had need to watch and pray always, that we may be accounted worthy to escape the Judgment of the great Day, and to stand before the Son of Man. Such Thoughts as these should continually possess our Souls, and Heaven should be always in our Eye, as if, with St. Stephen, *We saw the Heavens open'd, and Jesus standing at the Right Hand of God*, to see how we behave ourselves here below; and when we have fought a good Fight, and finish'd our Course, and kept the Faith, to receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also.

To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory now and for evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N CLXII.

The Circumstances and Benefits of our Saviour's Ascension.

ACTS i. 9, 10, 11.

And when he had spoken these Things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward Heaven, as he went up, beho'd, two Men stood by them in white Apparel, which also said, Ye Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go into Heaven.

THERE are two Occasions of this * Day accidentally meeting together, which bear some resemblance to one another; the Ascension of our blessed Saviour into Heaven, and his Exaltation in his Kingdom, being crowned with Glory and Honour, and set on the Right Hand of the Majesty on High: And the Restoration of our Sovereign to his just Rights, and Royal State and Dignity here upon earth, by a miraculous Providence of God, and as it were by a kind of Resurrection from the dead.

* Preached
May 29,
being As-
cen-
sion-
day.

The first of these being of a more Spiritual and Excellent Nature, shall be the Subject of my present Discourse, not forgetting the other in the Application of it.

The great Foundation of our Religion is the History of our Saviour, of his Incarnation and Miracles, and Life, of his Resurrection from the Dead, and Ascension into Heaven, and Intercession for us at the Right Hand of God; and the Doctrines and Articles concerning these, make up the main Body of the Christian Faith; and therefore, nothing can be more useful, than the Explication of these, and a serious Consideration and Meditation upon them.

In these words you have an Account of our Saviour's Ascension into Heaven; concerning which, we will consider these three Things:

First, The Circumstances foregoing his Ascension.

Secondly, The Circumstances of his Ascension.

Thirdly, The consequent Benefits and Advantages of it.

First, The Circumstances foregoing his Ascension; *And when he had spoken these Things, he was taken up.* This refers to the Discourse which our Saviour had with his Apostles, immediately before he was taken up from them into Heaven, of which we have an Account in the Verses before the Text, *Ver. 4.* Being assembled with them, and just ready to take his Leave of them, he commands them *that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the Promise of the Father, which they had heard of him:* That is, they should not disperse themselves, 'till the Holy Ghost, which he had promised to send from his Father, was come upon them, in those miraculous Gifts and Powers, whereby they should be qualified for the Preaching of the Gospel to the World.

And when our Saviour had given them this Charge, they put a Question to him, concerning a Thing which, notwithstanding he had so plainly declared to them, that *his Kingdom was not of this World*, did still run in their Minds, about the Temporal Reign of the *Messias*, and a Glorious Kingdom by him to be set up among the *Jews*; *Ver. 6, They asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this Time restore the Kingdom to Israel?* To this our Saviour gives them no direct Answer, neither that he would, nor that he would not do what they expected; but gently reprehends their Curiosity; *Ver. 7. It is not for you to know the Times and Seasons, which the Father hath put into his own Power.* And instead of satisfying them in Things that did not concern them, he discourseth to them about those Things which

which did concern them; namely, how they should be qualified and sent forth to preach the Gospel to the World: Ver. 8. *But ye shall receive Power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be Witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and Samaria, and unto the utmost Parts of the Earth. And when he had spoken these Things, he was taken up.* These are the Circumstances preceding his Ascension.

Secondly, We will consider the Circumstances of his Ascension, and they are these four:

I. That our Saviour was taken up, while he was blessing his Disciples; *Luke xxiv. 51. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.*

II. That he was taken up in the View of his Disciples, and while their Eyes were attentively fix'd upon him: *While they beheld, he was taken up, Ver. 9. And Verse 10, it is said, They looked stedfastly towards Heaven, as he went up.*

III. That he was taken up in a Cloud: *And a Cloud received him out of their Sight.*

IV. The Place whither he went, Ver. 11. *The same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven;* which is elsewhere more particularly express'd, by declaring the Dignity to which he was exalted in Heaven, *being set down on the Right Hand of God, and having all Power in Heaven and in Earth committed to him.* These are the chief Circumstances of his Ascension, which I shall speak briefly to.

I. That our blessed Saviour was taken up while he was blessing his Disciples. This St. Luke does not mention here in the History of the *Acts*, having mention'd it before in his Gospel, to which he refers us; *Luke xxiv. 50, 51. speaking of our Saviour and his Apostles; And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lift up his Hands, and blessed them.* Lifting up of the Hands was a Ceremony used among the Jews, in blessing the People. *Levit. ix. 22. it is said there, that Aaron lift up his Hands towards the People, and blessed them.* So our Saviour here, in Imitation of the usual Ceremonies among the Jews: *And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.* The first Tidings of our Saviour's Birth were attended with Praises to God, and Blessings to Men; *Glory to God on high, Peace on Earth, and Good-will towards Men.* And when he died, he breathed out his Soul in blessings to his Enemies; in the Height of his Sufferings he was full of hearty Prayers, and good Wishes for those who were the Cause of them: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And after his Resurrection from the dead, just as he left the World, he was taken out of it, and translated into Heaven, with a Blessing in his mouth: *While he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.* And indeed his whole Life, all that he did, and all that he suffer'd, his coming into the World, and his going out of it, was all a Blessing to Mankind; *God sent him to bless us, in turning us away every one from his Iniquity.* He was always wishing well to us, and doing well for us; *He went about doing good.*

A blessed Pattern to us, *Leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps:* A lovely and desirable Example; in Imitation whereof, we should endeavour that our whole Life may be a blessing and Benefit to Mankind; and that when we leave the World, we may be found so doing as our Lord did, doing the Work of Heaven while we are going thither.

II. He was taken up in the View of his Disciples, and while their Eyes were attentively fix'd upon him: *While they beheld, he was taken up, V. 9. And V. 10. it is said, They looked stedfastly toward Heaven, as he went up.* After the Apostles were fully convinc'd, by several Appearances of our Saviour to them, and familiar Conversation with them, that he was indeed risen from the Dead; that they might be fully satisfied that *he came from God, and went to him,* he was in their Sight, while he was speaking to them, taken up into Heaven. And this is no small Confirmation of the Truth of our Religion, that our Saviour did not only work the greatest Miracles while he was alive, and after Death rose again, and conversed among Men; but was visibly taken up into Heaven. So that if all Things be duly consider'd, never did any Man give so many Evidences of his being sent from God, as our Blessed Saviour did. He delivered the Truth of God with a divine Authority; and did the Works of God with all imaginable Evidence of a Divine Power; and with a divine Patience submitted to the Will of God, enduring the greatest

Sufferings;

Sufferings; and by the mighty Power of God was raised from the dead; and in a visible Manner, by the same divine Power, taken up into Heaven.

III. He was taken up in a Cloud: *He was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight.* Which Circumstance, tho' it do not seem very material; yet does it fitly represent to us the difference between the two Dispensations of the Law, and of the Gospel. *Elias* was carried up by a Whirlwind into Heaven, in a fiery Chariot, with Horses of Fire: but our Saviour in a Cloud; to signify to us the Coolness and Calmness of the Gospel-Dispensation, in Comparison of that of the Law; which difference our Saviour had before observed to his Disciples, upon a remarkable Occasion, *Luke ix. 54, 55.* When they would have call'd for Fire from Heaven, to have consumed the Samaritans for refusing to entertain our Saviour, as *Elias* had done in a like Case, our Saviour severely reproves that fierce Spirit of theirs, as by no means suitable to the Gospel: *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of: For the Son of Man came not to destroy Men's Lives, but to save them.* And just answerable to the difference between the Spirit of *Elias* and our Saviour, was the different Manner of their Translation into Heaven; the one gently received up in a Cloud; the other violently taken up by a Whirlwind, carried in a Chariot of Fire drawn by Horses of Fire.

And there is likewise another difference not altogether unworthy of our Observation. The Blessing which *Elijah* left to *Elisha* at his parting from him, and the Promise of his Spirit to be imparted to him, is conceived in very doubtful Words; *2 Kings ii. 9. Elijah said to Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, Let a double Portion of thy Spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard Thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if thou see me not, it shall not be so.* This was very doubtful, suitable to the Obscurity of the Law: But our Saviour, when he parted from his Disciples, makes a plain and absolute Promise of the Holy Ghost to them answerable to the Clearness and Grace of the Gospel: *Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many Days hence.* So wisely did God order all Circumstances concerning our Saviour, that every Thing belonging to him, every Action that he did, and every Circumstance of it might have some important Signification.

IV. The last Circumstance of our Saviour's Ascension, is the Place whither he went, *Ver. xi. This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven.* And this is elsewhere more particularly express'd, by declaring the Dignity to which he was exalted in Heaven; *Being set down on the Right Hand of God, and having all Power in Heaven and Earth committed to him. Mark xvi. 19. He was received up into Heaven, and sat on the Right Hand of God:* Which Phrase signifies our Saviour's being advanced in his human Nature, to an Honour and Dignity next to that of the Divine Majesty; the Right Hand being esteemed the Place of greatest Honour. This Exaltation of Christ, the Apostle tells us, was confer'd upon him as a Reward of his great Humiliation and Sufferings; *Heb. xii. 2. Who for the Joy that was set before him endured the Cross, and despised the Shame, and is set down at the Right Hand of the Throne of God.* And by Virtue of this Exaltation, the Apostle proves him to be exalted in his Human Nature above the Angels, *Heb. i. 3, 4. When he had by himself purged our Sins, he sat down on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the Angels, as he hath by Inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they;* that is, being advanced to a higher Dignity; for Name among the Hebrews signifies Dignity and Honour. So the Apostle useth the Word Name, *Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name: That at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things in Earth, and things under the Earth; and that every Tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.* So likewise, *Eph. i. 20, 21. Whom he raised from the Dead, and set at his own Right Hand in Heavenly Places, far above all Principalities, and Powers, and Might, and Dominion, and every Name that is named not only in this World, but in that which is to come.* And now, wherein this Dignity doth consist, the same Apostle tells us in the next Words; *That he hath put all things under his Feet, and given him to be Head over all things to the Church;* which is the same with what our Saviour told his Apostles before his Ascension, *All Power is given me in Heaven and in Earth;* that is, God hath committed the Government of the World into his Hands, for the Benefit and Advantage of his Church
here

here in this World, and for the Dispensing of Rewards and Punishments to good and bad Men in the next Life.

And though the Apostles did only see him taken up, and received in a cloud out of their Sight, and were not Witnesses of his Advancement and Exaltation at the Right Hand of God; yet they had, and we have, sufficient Assurance of it, both by what our Saviour declared before his Ascension, and by the Effects which followed after. Before he ascended, he told them whither he was going, and what Power and Dignity would be conferr'd upon him, that *all Power in Heaven and Earth was committed to him*; and that as an Evidence of this Exaltation at the Right Hand of God, and the Power there confer'd upon him, he would in a few Days send down the Holy Ghost upon them in a sensible Manner, and in great and sensible Effects, enabling them to speak with Tongues, and to work all Sorts of Miracles. After this he was in their Sight taken up from them, and carried towards Heaven; and ten Days after, the Holy Ghost, according to his Promise, came down upon them in miraculous Powers and Gifts. So that here was abundant Evidence to them of his Exaltation in Heaven, they having seen him taken up, and carried thitherwards, and after this finding the wonderful Effects of his being there, and of the Power which was conferred upon him.

The *third* and *last* Thing to be spoken to, is the consequent Benefits of our Saviour's Ascension and Exaltation; and they are chiefly these *three*: The sending of the Holy Ghost; His powerful Intercession for us at the Right Hand of God; and the Confirmation of our Faith, as to the Truth of his Doctrine in general, and particularly as to his coming to Judgment.

I. The sending of the Holy Ghost in miraculous Powers and Gifts upon the Apostles, to qualify them for the speedy and effectual Propagation of the Gospel, and to give Credit to them in the Preaching of it. By the Gift of Tongues, they were enabled to preach the Gospel to all Nations; and by the other miraculous Powers, God bare witness to the Testimony which they gave of our Saviour's Doctrine and Resurrection. And this was a great Benefit; for to this we owe the great Blessing of the Gospel, and the spreading of the Christian Religion through the World; and this was properly the Fruit of our Saviour's Ascension into Heaven, and his Exaltation at the Right Hand of God, and of that Royal Power and Majesty which he was invested withal. God in his wise Dispensation of Things having so ordered, that this Dignity and Power should be the Reward of our Saviour's Obedience and Sufferings; which may serve to explain to us that Passage, John vii. 39. *This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* The giving of these Gifts of the Holy Ghost, was purposely reserved by God, to be an Instance of that Power and Glory, wherewith our Saviour was to be invested upon his Ascension into Heaven, and Exaltation at the Right Hand of God; and therefore our Saviour tells his Disciples, that they ought not to be troubled at his Departure, because, 'till he had left them, the Holy Ghost would not come; John xvi. 7. *I tell you the Truth, It is expedient for you that I go away: For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.*

II. Another mighty Benefit of our Saviour's Ascension and Exaltation, is his powerful Intercession for us at the Right Hand of God. And this is a mighty Advantage and Comfort to have a perpetual Patron and Advocate at the Right Hand of God, to plead our Cause, to solicit our Concernments, and represent our Wants and to offer up our Prayers and Requests to God, in the Virtue of his meritorious Sacrifice; to have so good a Friend in the Court of Heaven, in such Power and Favour with the great King of the World. This under the Law was shadowed by the High Priest's going into the Holy of Holies, once every Year alone, carrying Blood with him, to offer for the Sins of the People; answerably to which, our Saviour is once for all enter'd into the Heavens, to intercede with God for us, by the Representation of that Sacrifice which he offer'd for our Sins, and of that Blood which was shed for us. So the Apostle tells us, Heb. ix. 24. *That Christ is not enter'd into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into Heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us.* And this is a mighty Comfort to us under the Guilt of our Sins, that *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is a Propitiation for our Sins, and for the Sins of the whole World.* This

is a great Comfort under all Tryals and Temptations, that *We have not an High-Priest that cannot be touched with a sense of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are.* He that is our Mediator and Intercessor, knows by Experience the Infirmities of our Nature, and hath learned by his own Sufferings to compassionate ours.

And this is a mighty Encouragement to our Prayers, and gives us Confidence and Hopes of good Success in our Addresses to God, that they are offer'd by so powerful and prevalent a Hand. So the Apostle reasons, *Heb. iv. 14, 16. Seeing then we have a great High-priest that is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God; let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

In a word, this may animate us against all the Enemies of our Salvation, because he that hath all Power in Heaven and Earth is concerned for us, and is continually soliciting our Cause with God: *Heb. vii. 25, Wherefore he is able to save them to the utmost, who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for us.*

III. The Ascension of our Saviour into Heaven, is a mighty Confirmation of our Faith, both as to the Truth of his Doctrine in general, and particularly as to his coming again at the End of the World, to judge the Quick and the Dead, to reward the Righteous, and to punish the Sinners and Ungodly.

1. As to the Truth of his Doctrine in general. If after all the Miracles of his Life, and his Resurrection from the Dead, any Man can doubt whether he came from God, and was sent by him to teach the World; yet this, methinks, is Evidence beyond all Exception, that God took him to himself, that he was visibly taken up into Heaven; and tho' the Witnesses of his Ascension did not see him in Heaven, yet the sending of the Holy Ghost, according to his Promise, was an abundant Evidence that he was received up into Glory. Upon this Account it is that our Saviour says, that the coming of the Holy Ghost should *convince the World of Sin, for not believing in him*; because the sending of the Holy Ghost, was an Evidence that he was in Glory; and his being taken up into Glory, was a Demonstration that he was a true Prophet, and sent from God, and consequently that they were guilty of a great Sin, who did not believe in him. And,

2. This likewise is a great Confirmation of our Faith, as to our Saviour's Coming again at the End of the World, to judge the Quick and the Dead. St. Peter tells us, *Acts x. 42. that our Saviour after his Resurrection, did particularly give in charge to his Apostles, to testify to the People, that it was he that was ordained of God, to be the judge of quick and dead.* And what Argument more proper to persuade them of this, than to see him visibly taken up into Heaven; and at the very Time of his Ascension, to be admonish'd by Angels, that this same Person whom they saw carried up into Heaven, should in the same visible manner come down from Heaven again at the End of the World? So the Text tells us, that *while the Apostles looked stedfastly toward Heaven, as he went up, behold two Men stood by them in white apparel, that is, two Angels in the Appearance of Men, which said, Ye Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner, as you have seen him go into Heaven; that is, in a visible manner, and in a Cloud.* For as *he was received up in a Cloud out of their sight*; so at his return to judge the World, Men shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, *Matt. xxiv. 30.* And this is a great Confirmation of our Faith of a future Judgment; that our Saviour, immediately after his Resurrection, declared himself to be *appointed by God Judge of quick and dead*; and when he was ascended, the Angels declared that *he should come again in like manner as they had seen him taken up.* So that they who believe his Ascension, cannot doubt of his return to Judgment; nothing being more credible, than the Saying of one whom God raised from the Dead, and visibly took to himself.

And now to make some reflection upon what hath been delivered. The Consideration of our Saviour's Ascension into Heaven, and Exaltation at the Right Hand of God, is very comfortable to all true Christians, in these two Respects:

I. In respect of our Condition in this World.

II. In respect of the Happiness of the next World.

I. In respect of our Condition in this World. The Church of Christ, and every particular Member of it, every true Christian, is exposed to a great many Troubles and Dangers in this World: But it is Matter of great Comfort to us, in the Consideration of all the Evils we are liable to, that we are under his Patronage and Protection,

who hath all Power given him in Heaven and Earth. He who is the Head and Defender of the Church, is set down on the Right Hand of the Majesty of God, exalted far above Principalities, and Powers, and Might, and Dominion, and every Name that is named in this World, and that which is to come; so that the true Church of Christ need not fear either the Powers of this World, or the Malice of Devils, because we have a sure Friend, who is greater than all these, whom God hath made his Vicegerent, and hath put all Things under his Feet, and hath given the Government of the World, and of all Creatures, into his Hands, for the Good and Benefit of his Church; who is able to protect his Church, and every true Member of it, against all the Injuries of Earth, and the Malice of Hell; and if he permit us at any Time to fall into Sufferings, he is able to support us under them, and reward us for them: and if he be for us, who can be against us? He that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the Right Hand of God, and maketh Intercession for us, Rom. xiv. 9. For this End, Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the Dead and Living; and now that he is in Heaven, and clothed with Majesty and Glory, he is not less concerned for us, than when he conversed with us upon Earth, and suffered and died for us: For he is there in our Nature, that Nature in which he suffered more than any of us can do; and therefore we may with Confidence make our Application to him in all our Distresses and Difficulties, because he is nearly allied to us, Bone of our Bone, and Flesh of our Flesh, and was once tempted like our selves, and from the Experience of his own Tryals and Sufferings, still retains a quick Sense of the Frailties and Infirmities of Mortality. This Consideration the Apostle to the Hebrews makes use of, to support Christians under all their Persecutions for the Profession of Christianity. Heb. iv. 14, 15. Seeing then we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God; let us hold fast our Profession. For we have not an High-Priest, that cannot be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities; but was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin.

II. The Consideration of Christ's Ascension and Exaltation is likewise Matter of Comfort to us, in respect of the Happiness which we hope for in the next World. No Religion that ever was in the World hath given Men so sensible a Demonstration of a future Life, and a blessed Immortality in another World, as the Christian Religion hath done, by the Resurrection of our blessed Saviour from the Dead, and his visible Ascension into Heaven. This is a sensible Argument, and levell'd to the Capacities of all Mankind. The Reasonings of the Philosophers concerning the Immortality of Mens Souls, and a future State after this Life, besides the Uncertainty of them, have also this Disadvantage, that they are only calculated for the more refined and speculative Part of Mankind: But every Man is capable of the Force of this Argument, that he who declared to the World another Life after this, and the happy Condition of good Men in another World, was himself raised from the Dead, and visibly taken up into Heaven. And now it is no difficult Matter for us to believe that God will raise us, and advance us to Glory and Happiness, when we consider what an Earnest he hath given us of this, by the Working of that mighty Power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the Dead, and set him at his own Right Hand in heavenly Places.

If then we believe that Christ is ascended into Heaven, and sits at the Right Hand of God, let this raise our Minds above the vain Delights and perishing Enjoyments of this World, to the Consideration of those better and more glorious Things that are above; let us often ascend thither in our Thoughts, whither our Saviour is gone before us, to prepare a Place for us; and from whence he hath promised to come again at the End of the World, to receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also.

But then we must endeavour to live as he did, if we hope to go to him when we die. Every Man that hath this Hope in him, purifies himself even as he is pure. Let us then have our Conversation in Heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the working of that mighty Power, whereby he is able to subdue all Things to himself.

To conclude: Let us heartily thank God for the whole Dispensation of our Salvation, by the Incarnation and Doctrine, by the holy Life and meritorious Death of our blessed Saviour, and by that Demonstration of God's mighty Power and Goodness,

ness, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the Dead, and set him at his own Right Hand in Heavenly Places, far above all Principalities, and Powers, and Might, and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come; having put all Things under his Feet, and given him to be the Head over all Things to the Church, which is his Body.

The Consideration whereof is (as you have heard) a mighty Consolation unto us under all the Troubles and Dangers to which the Church of Christ is exposed in this World. He who hath all Power committed to him by God, and is made Head over all Things for the Benefit and Advantage of the Church, we may be sure, will have a particular Care of it, and tender it as his own Body: And as he is able, he is ready upon all Occasions to protect and defend his own Religion, and the true Professors of it, against all the Fury and Malice of Men and Devils, so that the Gates of Hell, the strongest Combinations and deepest Conspiracies of all the Powers of Darkness, shall not finally prevail against it. Here is the Foundation of our Hopes and Confidence, that our Redeemer is strong, and that God hath given him a Kingdom and Power, that is paramount and superior to all earthly Kingdoms and Powers; and tho' they should conspire together, and be of one Mind, unite all their Force, and give their Power and Strength unto the Beast, to make War with the Lamb and his Company, that is, the true Church and faithful Servants of Christ; yet the Lamb shall overcome them, because he is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings.

And let us likewise bless God for the wonderful Restoration of His Majesty to the Government of these Kingdoms, who under Christ is the great Defender of our Faith and Religion; and let us pay that Duty and Obedience, which becomes us, to a Prince whom God hath so miraculously preserved and restored; and pour out our most fervent Prayers to God, that he would long preserve him, and protect his Person from all Dangers, who is the great security of our Religion, * and the Life of all our Hopes, and as truly as any Prince ever was to any People, the Light of our Eyes, and the Breath of our Nostrils; and that God would make him wise as ^{towards the Conclusion of the} an Angel of God, to go in and out before this great People; and grant to him, and all the People of this Land, to know in this our Day the Things that belong to our Peace, ^{Reign of King Charles II.} before they be hid from our Eyes.

S E R M O N C L X I I I .

Of the Gift of Tongues conferr'd on the Apostles.

A C T S ii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

And when the day of pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one Place. And suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance.

ONE of the chief designs of the dispensation of God towards the Jews, and of the giving of the law to them by Moses, was to be a type of the Christian Church, and of the dispensation of the gospel by the son of God; and therefore no wonder, if there be a great correspondence between them, and that the Divine Providence should so order the event of things, that the Seasons of dispensing the great evangelical blessings, should happen at the same times, when the great blessings of the law, which were the types of them, were dispensed and commemorated. Thus our Saviour, who was the Lamb of God, was slain and

offer'd up at the same time that the Passover was kept, and the paschal lamb was slain and offer'd up among the *Jews*; and the redemption of the world from the slavery of sin and Satan, is celebrated by Christians at the very same season of the year, when the deliverance of the *Israelites* from the *Ægyptian* slavery was commemorated by them: and as at the time of *Pentecost* (which was fifty days after) the *Jews* were appointed to rejoice before the Lord, and to offer their first-fruits by way of grateful acknowledgment to God for the fruits of the Earth, then newly gather'd in; so did God likewise at the same time impart the first-fruits of the holy spirit to the apostles, who were to be the first and chief labourers in that spiritual harvest, to which they were appointed by the Lord of the harvest: and which is yet more remarkable, at the same season that the law was deliver'd to the *Jews* from Mount *Sinai*, and the first covenant establish'd, namely, at the time of *Pentecost*, as is commonly supposed by the *Jewish* doctors, and as may probably be collected from the text, *Exod.* xix. 1. I say, at that very time, the gospel, which contains the terms of the new covenant, began to be publish'd from Mount *Sion*, in as wonderful, tho' not so terrible a manner, as the law was given from Mount *Sinai*. And thus it was foretold by the antient prophets, *Isa.* ii. 3. and *Micah* iv. 2. that out of *Sion* should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from *Jerusalem*.

I shall briefly explain the words, and as I pass along make some short observations upon them, and then fix upon that which is mainly intended in them, viz. This first and most miraculous gift of the holy ghost, which was conferred upon the apostles when they were assembled together at *Jerusalem* upon the day of

* Preach'd
on Whit-
sunday.

* *Pentecost*.

When the day of *Pentecost* was fully come, that is, when the fifty days after *Easter* were fulfilled, upon the fiftieth day, which was called the day of *Pentecost*, they were all with one accord in one place. They were all, that is, all the twelve apostles; for upon them it was that the gift of tongues was bestowed; because they were appointed to be the chief publishers of the gospel, having been eye-witnesses of our Saviour's miracles, and particularly of his resurrection from the dead. There is no mention of any other in this chapter, but only of the twelve apostles: ver. 14. we find *Peter* and the eleven spoken of; and ver. 37. it is said that the multitude, who were astonish'd at this miracle, spake to *Peter* and the rest of the apostles.

They were all with one accord in one place. Unity is an excellent qualification and disposition for the holy spirit of God and his gifts; for which reason, the peace and good agreement of Christians is called by *St. Paul*, the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace. When the apostles were of one heart, and one mind, then the holy spirit of God came down upon them in this wonderful manner.

Ver. 2. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind. As they were together waiting for the promise of the Father, all on the sudden there came a sound, as of a strong gust of wind. This was a fit emblem of the divine spirit; for to this our Saviour had compared it, in his discourse to *Nicodemus*, *John* iii. 8. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the spirit.

As of a rushing mighty wind. To signify to us, that the publication of the gospel was attended with the same divine presence and power, that the giving of the law was; but not with the same circumstances of terror, which the apostle to the *Hebrews* describes, when he sets forth to us the difference between Mount *Sinai* and Mount *Sion*, that is, between the two dispensations of the Law and the gospel. *Heb.* xii. 18, 19. speaking of Mount *Sinai*, from which the Law was given, Ye are not come, says he, unto the mount, that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; that is, that terrible voice of God, wherein the ten words of the law were deliver'd; which voice then shook the earth, as the apostle tells us, ver. 26. A voice so terrible, that they who heard it, earnestly begged that they might hear it no more. These were all circumstances of great horror: but at the coming down of the holy ghost, here was no trumpet nor terrifying voice, no thunder, nor darkness, nor tempest, only the sound as it were of a strong gust of wind, as a sensible signification of a divine presence and power.

And it filled all the house where they were sitting. The whole house, to represent the world, which was to be filled with the sound of the gospel; according to that of the Psalmist, cited by St. Paul, Rom. x. 18. where speaking of the general publication of the gospel, Their sound, says he, went out into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.

It filled all the house. This is that, which ver. 5. of this chapter, our Saviour calls baptizing the apostles with the Holy Ghost, so that they who sat in the house were as it were immers'd in the Holy Ghost, as they who were baptized with water, were overwhelm'd and cover'd all over with water, which is the proper notion of Baptism.

Ver. 3. *And there appear'd unto them cloven tongues, as it were of fire, and sat upon each of them. Cloven tongues,* to signify the diversity and distribution of them; this gift being imparted to every one of the apostles: for it is said, that these tongues sat upon each of them.

Cloven tongues as it were of fire, to signify the penetrating virtue and efficacy of their preaching. And this is that which John the Baptist calls baptizing with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, meaning the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, in the form of fiery tongues; *divided,* to signify the diversity of them. At first men were all of one language; and the confusion and division of tongues, was a curse and punishment upon them, and the cause of their dispersion through the world; but now, God by the gift of several tongues designed to gather mankind together, and to unite them in one religion.

And it sat upon each of them. These cloven fiery tongues sat upon each of the apostles, that is, remain'd visibly upon them for some time; to signify the permanency of this gift of tongues. It was not like several of the other miraculous gifts, which did not constantly reside upon them; for they had them not at all times, nor when they pleased, but as God was pleased to dispense and communicate them: But this gift of tongues was constant, because they had continual use of it; and it was common to all the apostles, because they were to be the publishers of the gospel, and the witnesses of our Lord's resurrection, which was the great miracle whereby the gospel was to be confirmed.

Ver. 4. *And they were all fill'd with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance. And began to speak with other tongues:* The vulgar translation renders it, *variis linguis, with divers tongues;* that is, they spake several languages besides their own mother tongue, or, as it is express'd in our Saviour's promise to the apostles, Mark xvi. 17. *with new tongues.* These signs, says our Lord before his ascension, *shall follow them that believe; they shall speak with new tongues;* that is, they should all on the sudden speak languages which they had never learn'd, nor had any knowledge of before.

I know not who was the first author of that conceit, that the miracle was not in the speakers, but in the hearers; that is, the apostles spake in their own mother tongue, (the Syriac); and the hearers of several Nations heard them every one in their own language; which indeed must be acknowledged to be as great a miracle, or greater, than if the apostles had spoken so many different languages: but this seems to be a very groundless, and unreasonable conceit, and very contrary to this relation of this miraculous gift, and to all the circumstances of it. For the text expressly says, that *they spake with other tongues,* that is, in languages different from their mother tongue, in which they spake before, otherwise they could not be call'd *other, or new tongues.* And 1 Cor. xii. 28. the apostle, among the several gifts which God hath bestowed upon the church, mentions *diversity of tongues,* which had not been true, if the apostles had all spoken in one language. And ver. 30. he makes a difference between the gift of speaking several languages, and interpreting things spoken in divers tongues. *Do all, says he, speak with tongues? Do all interpret?* But if what the apostles had spoken in one language, had been heard of those of several Nations in their own language, there had been no need of interpretation. And chap. xiv. ver. 2. *He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man beareth him;* that is, no man understandeth what he saith, God only knows it; whereas if they heard every one in their own language, they all understood what was said. And ver. 13. *Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that*

that he may interpret. But what need of that, if every one heard what was spoken in his own tongue? and *ver. 16.* the apostle says, *that he that was unlearned, could not say Amen at giving of thanks in an unknown tongue; because he understood not what was said.* And *ver. 27.* *If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at most by three, and that by course, and let one interpret.* All which plainly contradicts that foolish conceit, that the miracle of the gift of tongues was not in the speakers, but the hearers.

That which seems to have given occasion to this error, was, that they could not understand how any man should at the same time speak divers languages: but there is no ground at all to suppose so; because it is not said, that any of the apostles did at the same time speak several languages, (which is impossible) but that the apostles spake several languages, so that the several nations then present heard some or other of the apostles speaking in their own language. So that to trouble our selves no farther about this idle conceit, the miracle was not, that every one of the apostles did speak several languages at the same time; but they all spake on a sudden languages which they had never learnt before; so that the people of several nations, that were then present, did then hear some or other of the apostles speaking to them in their own language.

Having thus explain'd the several expressions and passages in the text,

I come now to speak to the main argument contain'd in them, *viz.* This miraculous gift which was confer'd on the apostles, of speaking all on the sudden the languages of all nations, with whom they had occasion to converse, tho' they had never learned them before.

And in the handling of this argument, these following particulars will be fit to be consider'd, and enquir'd into by us,

First, The Strangeness of this gift or miracle.

Secondly, The clear evidence of this miracle, that it was real, and that there was no manner of imposture or deceit in it, nor could there be any suspicion of it.

Thirdly, The wonderful effect of it immediately, and upon the spot, upon the very day, and in the place where it was first wrought.

Fourthly, The great necessity and usefulness of it.

Fifthly, The reason why it was the first of all the miraculous gifts, and so visibly confer'd upon the apostles, before any of the rest.

Sixthly and Lastly, I shall enquire, whether there be any necessity now, and consequently any possibility of the renewing this miracle, in order to the conversion of the infidel world, and those many and great nations in the remoter parts of the world, which do still continue strangers and enemies to the Christian Religion.

First, The strangeness of this gift or miracle. It was of that nature, that the like was never known in the world, neither before nor since the first ages of Christianity, upon any occasion whatsoever; nor can we well imagine any other sort of miracle that could probably affect men more, and strike them with greater wonder and admiration, and have been a more sensible demonstration of a divine power and presence accompanying the apostles, than to see and hear them all on the sudden perfectly to speak so many languages, which they had never learned before.

Especially if all the circumstances of the thing be duly weighed and consider'd; that they who pretended to be endowed with this gift, were not strangers newly arrived and come to *Jerusalem*, who before they came thither might possibly by great study and pains have attained to the knowledge and skill of several languages, (each of them suppose two languages apiece) and have craftily combined together to impose upon the world, by the pretence and ostentation of such a miracle: but these persons were known to all that dwelt in *Jerusalem*, and had for a long time been taken notice of, as the disciples and followers of *Jesus*, who was lately crucified among them; their education was known, and the meanness of their condition, that they were simple and illiterate persons, who never had the advantage or opportunity of attaining to this skill in an ordinary way; and therefore it must be concluded to have been an extraordinary and supernatural gift.

Besides, that this miracle was very publicly wrought, and the noise of it in a few hours drew together the strangers of several nations, who being become

profelytes

profelytes of the *Jewish* Religion, dwelt at *Jerusalem*; these all coming together, upon the noise and fame of this Miracle, found it to be true, and, as appears from the History, were so well satisfied of the Reality of it, that a very great number, upon the Occasion of it, and upon that very Day, became Profelytes to the Christian Religion, and joined themselves to the Apostles and their Followers, (who were then but few in number) and were presently admitted into the Christian Church by Baptism, the usual ceremony of admitting Profelytes among the *Jews*. This was a present and great effect, and is a great Evidence and Confirmation of the Truth and Reality of the Thing: But this I shall have occasion to speak more fully to, when I come to the *Fifth* Particular which I proposed.

I add farther, that our Saviour seems to have reckoned this as one of the greatest of Miracles, and therefore to have reserved it, for an instance and demonstration of the glorious Power which he was invested withal, after his Ascension into Heaven; as may very probably be collected from that declaration and Promise which he made to his Apostles, a little before his Departure from them, *Job. xiv. 12. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the Works that I do, shall he do also, and greater Works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father*; that is, in order to the sending of the Holy Ghost, to endow them with Power from on high, to qualify them for the publishing of the Gospel, which they were forbidden to enter upon 'till this Promise was made good to them. But what were these greater Works, which he here promiseth to enable them to do, after he was gone to his Father? For he expressly promiseth, that they shall not only *do the Works which he had done*, but *greater Works than those*: and what could these be? Our Saviour had wrought many and great Miracles almost in all kinds imaginable; he had cast out devils, and healed all sorts of infirmities and diseases; he had changed Nature, by turning water into wine, and had stopped the course of it, by stilling the winds and the sea by his Word; and he had raised the Dead; and now what Work could that be which was greater than any of these? Even that which I am speaking of, the miraculous Power of speaking all languages, without learning them; a thing never heard of in the World before. And this was the first sensible effect of the coming of the Holy Ghost upon them, the first miraculous Power with which he endowed his Apostles, after he was ascended into Heaven, and gone to his Father; an evident testimony of the glory and power which he was invested withal, after he was taken up into Heaven, and sat down at the Right Hand of God, to signify both the Honour and Power which was conferr'd upon him, in that he enabled his Apostles, when he was absent from them, to do that, which whilst he was present with them, he had never enabled them to do, nor ever did himself; all which tends to advance this Miracle, and to shew the greatness and strangeness of it above any other. And unless we fix it upon this Miracle, it will be hard, if not impossible, to give a good account of the accomplishing of that solemn promise of our Saviour to his Disciples, after he should be gone to his Father, that is, after his Ascension into Heaven; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the Works that I do shall he do also, and greater Works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father*. Now what miraculous work can be instanced in, that was done by the Apostles, and was greater than any our Saviour did, when he was upon Earth, but this only of Speaking all Languages on the sudden, without ever having learned them? Which Consideration alone does confirm me past all doubt, that our Saviour in this promise meant the miraculous Gift of Tongues, which was the first Gift that was conferred upon them, after he was ascended into Heaven, and gone to his Father. I proceed,

Secondly, To consider the clear evidence of this Miracle, that it was real, and that there could be no Suspicion of any manner of imposture and deceit in it.

It was publicly wrought before many Witnesses, and those the most competent of all other, because they were highly prejudiced against the Apostles, and great enemies to them, as being the Disciples of him whom they had so lately crucified as an Impostor. They gave clear proof of this miraculous power in the presence of great multitudes of several Nations, who heard them every one speaking to them in their own language: And besides the present demonstration of this miraculous Gift, to those of several Nations that dwelt at *Jerusalem*, they gave evidence of it in all Places and Nations whither they went preaching the Gospel; so that

that this Miracle accompanied and continued with them, 'till the Gospel was made known to a great part of the then known World, and lasted for a whole Age, and 'till there was no farther need and use of it.

But it may be said, that tho' this was sufficiently evident to them that dwelt at *Jerusalem*, who knew the Apostles, and the circumstances of their education; yet it was not so credible to others, who lived remote from *Jerusalem*, and neither knew the Apostles, nor the manner of their education, nor were Witnesses of the miraculous rise and beginning of this Gift of Tongues. These could only hear them speak in their Language; but whether their knowledge of this language had been acquired by study, or was supernatural and infused, for this they had only common Fame, and the Apostles own word, which may seem to have been but a slender Evidence for a thing so strange. And so it must be acknowledged to be, if the Apostles affirmation, that this Gift was supernaturally conferred upon them, had not been otherwise countenanced and supported; as it was in a very extraordinary and remarkable manner, by their being endowed with a Power to work other Miracles of all kinds, which they did every where, and very frequently upon all Occasions. And this was sufficient to give credit to what they affirmed, concerning this supernatural Gift of Tongues: For when they saw them work other Miracles of all sorts, they had no reason to doubt of the Truth and Reality of this miraculous Gift of Tongues, which was abundantly confirmed by the other miraculous Powers with which they were endowed. So that the Gospel, where-ever it came, carried its own evidence along with it, and was confirmed by the very Manner of its Conveyance and Delivery; and well might Men entertain it as a Divine Doctrine, when the very manner and means, whereby it was conveyed to the World, was so strange and astonishing a Miracle, as was never wrought in the World before, upon any occasion whatsoever. And this will yet be farther evident, if we consider in the

Third Place, The wonderful effect which this Miracle immediately had upon the Spot, and on the very day when it first appeared.

It had so glaring an Evidence, and carried such Conviction in it, that the Doctrine which they who were endowed with miraculous Gifts did preach, was immediately received and entertained by a very great number of the Hearers; who, upon the Conviction of this great Miracle, became Profelytes to this new Religion, and were solemnly admitted to the profession of it by Baptism; as we read, *ver. 41.* of this Chapter; where, after St. Peter had made an end of his Sermon to the People upon this occasion, it is said, *Then they that gladly received his Word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand Souls.* Here was a mighty Effect, *Three thousand* converted at one sermon, being convinced by the evidence of this Miracle. And it is a very immediate Effect; for it is said, that *the same day three thousand were added to the Church.* Here was an effect proportionable to the Greatness and Strangeness of its Cause; a mighty Victory gained over the prejudices of Men, and the powers of Darkness, by the Light and Conviction of this Miracle, which our Saviour seems to have kept in reserve for this great Occasion, when his Gospel and Religion was to be first publish'd, and to make its solemn Entrance into the World. Here was a large portion of First-fruits, and a great earnest of that spiritual Harvest, which the Apostles had began to reap; of which the First-fruits among the *Jews* were a type: For their Harvest also was at this very season of the year; as I noted before.

Fourthly, We will consider the great Usefulness of this miraculous Gift, for the more easy and speedy conveyance of the Doctrine of Christianity, and the diffusing and spreading the Knowledge of it in the World; and this, if we consider it, not as a Miracle, but only as a means so very convenient to this purpose, that by the Advantage of it, the Gospel made a greater progress in the space of a few Years, than in Human Probability could have been made without it in many Ages; and it was spread farther in thirty Years, than could in reason have been expected in Fifteen hundred, by natural and ordinary means: *So mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed;* being carried on in so powerful and supernatural a manner.

Fifthly, We will consider, why this was the first miraculous Gift, conferred upon the Apostles more visibly, and before any of the rest. The other miraculous Powers were only visible in their effects; but this was visible, not only in the effects of

it, but likewise in the cause and the manner of its being conferr'd: *For the holy spirit rested upon them, in the form of fiery cloven tongues*; to signify not only the diversity of languages which they should be enabled to speak, but the quick and piercing efficacy of their speech. The reason of all which seems to be, because this was the greatest of all miracles, and therefore fit to be first: for, as I shewed before, this, in the judgment of our Saviour, (who best understood the different degrees of miracles) was greater than any of those which he himself in his lifetime had wrought; and likewise, because this miracle was of greater use than any of the rest, and more necessary to the effectual discharge of their apostolical office, and to the easy success, and more speedy effect of it. For by this miraculous gift more especially, the apostles were, as it were, consecrated to their office, and made capable to discharge it with ease and effect; their office being to publish the doctrine of the gospel to the world, and to be witnesses of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead, which was to be the great confirmation of his doctrine; neither of which they could, with any probability of effect and success, have done without this miraculous gift: for what slow progress must they have made, and how little could they have advanced in this work, had they either done all by interpreters, or been put to have learned the languages of the several nations, to which they had been to preach, before they could have publish'd this doctrine among them?

The *Jews*, who were very zealous of their religion, (which was likewise from God, and was attested by miracles) upon occasion of several calamities which befel them, and carried them into captivity, were dispersed in several nations; and yet how slowly, for want of this gift, did they gain profelytes to their religion? and how few did they convert to it in the space of four or five hundred years? By which we may judge how little christianity would have gained upon the world, had it not been countenanced and assisted from Heaven in this miraculous Manner. I come now to the

Sixth and last thing which I proposed to enquire into; namely, Whether there be any necessity now, and consequently, probability of the renewing of this miracle, in order to the conversion of infidels, and the gaining over of those many and great nations in the remoter parts of the world, who are still strangers and enemies to the Christian religion.

That which would induce a man to hope well in this case, is, that without some such miraculous gift, there is little or no probability of the conversion of infidel nations; unless God should be pleased, by some unexpected means, to bring over to Christianity some powerful prince of great reputation for his wisdom and virtue; who by the influence of his example, and by his favour and countenance, might give advantages to the planting of it among his subjects. And yet considering the inveterate and violent prejudices of men against a new religion, such an attempt would, in all human probability, be more likely to end in the ruin of the prince, and the overturning of his government, than in the establishing of a new religion. Of which kind there have been several instances very remarkable in *Japan* and *Aethiopia*, and perhaps in places and times nearer to us, and within our own memory.

But if any such thing should be attempted by private persons, the undertaking would meet with such insuperable obstacles, not only from the prejudices and interests of men, but from the great difficulty of gaining languages so different from our own, that it must in all likelihood have a very slow progress, and at last fall to the ground, for want of proper and effectual means to carry it on. For though the morality of the Christian Religion be admirable, and very apt to recommend it self to the unbiass'd and impartial reason of mankind (if any such thing were any where to be found;) yet * the death of the son of God is such a stumbling-block, * See Sermon 139 of this Vol. as is very hard for human reason to get over. Of which the *Jesuits* in *China* were so sensible, that, according to their usual sincerity, they thought best to conceal that most essential part of the Christian doctrine, which relates to the death and sufferings of our Saviour. So I am sure *St. Paul* took it to be, when he tells the *Corinthians*, that *He determined to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. This it seems he looked upon as the most material and valuable part of the Christian religion, and of greatest consequence to be known by us. But

the *Jesuits* it seems thought otherwise, and therefore concealed it from their converts: for which most shameful and unchristian practice, several of them were very lately under prosecution at *Rome*.

* See the
same Dis-
course.

Besides all this, * the matters of fact upon which the truth of Christianity does necessarily depend, as the birth, and life, and miracles, and death, and resurrection of our blessed Saviour, and his visible ascension into Heaven: I say, these matters of fact, though we have a most credible history and relation of them brought down to us, do not carry so strong and sensible a conviction in them, to those who never heard of them before, as to be able to conquer and bear down a violent prejudice: nor is it in reason to be expected, that these things should easily be admitted by those, who are utter strangers to our history of former times, and consequently not fit to judge of what value they are.

I speak not this to discourage any from using their best endeavours to propagate our religion among infidels, where the providence of God opens a door, and gives any opportunity for it. Among the many bad things that have been done in the church of *Rome*, there is one thing very much to their honour, that they have been at very great charge and pains in their *missions* for the conversion of the infidel nations, especially in the eastern parts of the world, to that which they account the true Christian religion. And if the matter had been as honestly managed, as I hope it was piously intended, and their charity and zeal had been equally warm for the conversion of the northern infidels, where there is nothing to be met with but frost and cold, as it hath been for the conversion of those parts of the world, where gold and spices abound, it had deserved great praise, notwithstanding their mistakes in religion, and the great mixture of errors and corruptions in it.

And it is no small reproach to the Protestant religion, that there hath not appeared an equal zeal among us for this purpose; and that to our unwearied endeavours to promote the interest of trade in foreign parts, there hath not been joined a like zeal and industry for the propagating of the Christian religion; which might surely be attempted, with more than ordinary advantage, in those places where we have so free a commerce.

† See the
fore cited
Discourse.

It is not good for men to be confident, where they are not certain; but † it seems to me not impossible, if the conversion of infidels to Christianity were sincerely and vigorously attempted by men of honest minds, who would make it their business to instruct those who are strangers to our religion in the pure doctrine of Christianity, free from all human mixtures and corruptions: it seems to me in this case, not at all improbable, that God would extraordinarily countenance such an attempt, by all fitting assistance, as he did the first publication of the gospel: for as the wisdom of God is not wont to do that which is superfluous, so neither is it wanting in that which is necessary. And from what hath been said upon this argument, the necessity seems to be much the same that it was at first.

I would not be mistaken in what I have said about this matter; I do not deliver it as positive, but only as probable divinity; no wise contrary to scripture and very agreeable to reason.

Thus much may suffice to have spoken concerning this miraculous gift of tongues, conferred upon the Apostles at the time of *Pentecost*.

S E R M O N C L I V .

Of the coming of the Holy Ghost, as an advocate
for Christ.

J O H N xvi. 7, 8.

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

TH E S E words are part of our Saviour's last sermon, which he made to his disciples a little before he left the world: and this sermon is only recorded by this evangelist, who hath set it down at large in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of his gospel. The main scope of it is, first to persuade them to the obedience and practice of that holy doctrine, which he had delivered to them while he was with them; and then, because their hearts were full of sorrow at the thoughts of his departure from them, knowing that for his sake they should be ill treated by the world, he arms them against these discouragements; he promiseth, not long after his departure from them, to send down his holy spirit upon them in miraculous powers and gifts, as a testimony to the world of the truth of his doctrine, and a clear conviction that he came from God; *ver. 26. of the 15th Chap. But when the comforter (or rather the advocate) is come, whom I will send unto you from the father, even the spirit of truth, which proceeds from the father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.* The testimony which the holy spirit should give to them, should give credit and strength to their testimony.

And this consideration he makes use of to comfort them under the sad thoughts of his departure, because his absence would be abundantly recompensed to them, by the coming of the Holy Ghost, which could not be 'till he had left the world; because this *comforter*, or *advocate*, was to be sent *in his name*, to come upon his account, and in his stead, to supply his absence. So that though they were greatly troubled at the thoughts of his departure, there was no cause for it, when all things were considered; for in truth, it was for their advantage, that he should depart from them, *verse the 6th of this chapter: But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you, that I go away: for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*

From which words, I shall consider these two things.

First, The necessity of Christ's leaving the world, in order to the coming of the Holy Ghost: *If I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

Secondly, The happy consequence and effect of the coming of the Holy Ghost: *And when he is come, he shall reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.* I shall as briefly as I can explain both these.

First, the necessity of Christ's leaving the world, in order to the coming of the Holy Ghost: *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* That it is the Holy Ghost which is here spoken of, and that as a *person*, and not as a *quality*, or *power*, or *virtue*, is plain from our Saviour's discourse all along this sermon, in which he is spoken of under the notion of a *person*, and that in as plain and express terms as Christ himself is. As the fa-

ther sent Christ, so is he said to send the Holy Ghost; as Christ is said to depart, so the Holy Ghost is said to come; as Christ is called an advocate, so the Holy Ghost is said to be another advocate; Christ our advocate to plead our cause with God, he Christ's advocate to plead his cause with the world; chap. xiv. 16, 17. And I will pray the father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. And who is that? Even the spirit of truth. And chap. xv. 26. But when the comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the father, even the spirit of truth. And in the verse immediately after the text, Howbeit, when he, the spirit of truth, is come. But expressly, chap. xiv. 26. he is called the Holy Ghost: but the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.

All the difficulty is concerning the word παρακλητῆς, which our translation renders the comforter. 'Tis true indeed, that the verb παρακαλεῖν is of a very large and unlimited signification; it sometimes signifies to comfort, very frequently to preach, teach, and exhort, and sometimes to plead as an advocate the cause of another. And this seems to be the proper notion of the word παρακλητῆς in this place, the advocate or patron of a cause, one that pleads for the party accused. And in this sense, and no other, Christ is called our παρακλητῆς, or advocate with the Father, 1 John ii. 1. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And as Christ is our advocate with the Father in Heaven; so the spirit is Christ's advocate here on earth, and pleads his cause with the world. And it is very observable, that this very word paraclete, tho' it be not an Hebrew, but a Greek word, is frequently used both by the Chaldee paraphrast, and other Jewish writers, in this sense of an advocate. And that this notion of the word agrees best with this place, I shall clearly shew, when I come to the second head of my discourse; namely, To shew the happy consequence and effect of the coming of the Holy Ghost, viz. the convincing of the world how injuriously they had dealt with Christ, and the clear vindication of his innocency, which is the proper office and work of an advocate.

Having thus fix'd the notion of the word παρακλητῆς in this place, we will now enquire what necessity or expediency there was, that Christ should leave the world, in order to the coming of the Holy Ghost: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the advocate will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

And of this I shall give an account in these two particulars:

I. From the method of the divine dispensation, in the redemption and salvation of man by Jesus Christ.

II. From the rational suitableness; and congruity of this dispensation.

I. From the method of the divine dispensation, in the redemption and salvation of man by Jesus Christ. Thus the scripture tells us, that God in his infinite wisdom had design'd and order'd things, that the son of God should come into the world, and live in a mean and abject condition; that he should be despised and rejected of men, persecuted and put to death; and that as a reward of all this submission and suffering, he should be raised again from the dead, taken up into Heaven, and placed on the right hand of the majesty on high; and that in the triumph of his ascension, he should lead captive death and hell, and all the powers of darkness; and being enter'd into the highest Heavens, and set on the right hand of God, as an act of power and royalty, he should send down his holy spirit in miraculous gifts upon men, for the conviction of the world, that the doctrine which he commanded his Apostles to publish to all nations, was from God. And therefore the Apostle St. Paul tells us expressly, that the communication of these gifts of the spirit was the proper effect and consequent of our Lord's exaltation, and one of the first acts of royalty which he exercised, after he was possess'd of his glorious kingdom, Ephes. iv. 7, 8. where speaking of the various gifts of the Spirit, Unto every one of us, saith he, is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. For which he cites the prediction of David, Psal. lxxviii. 18. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And, he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. So that we plainly see, that this was the dispensation of God, and the method which his wisdom hath pitch'd upon, that

that our Lord should first leave the world, and be taken up into glory, and then send down the Holy Ghost, in the plentiful effusion of miraculous gifts. So this evangelist expressly tells us in another place, which gives great light to the text, *Joh. vii. 39. But this* (says he) *spake he of the Spirit; which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* Implying, that according to the Divine disposal, it was ordered first, that Christ should be glorified, and being invested in his kingdom and glory, that then he should do acts of grace, and like a king at his coronation, scatter and dispense his gifts among men, by sending down his holy Spirit among them. And accordingly we find *St. Peter, Acts ii.* after that the Holy Ghost came down upon them, giving this account of it; ver. 32, 33. *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses: therefore being by the right of God exalted, and having received of the father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth that which ye now see and hear;* meaning the gift of tongues; so that he resolves it into the dispensation of God, who had thus designed and ordered things. And therefore in the

Second place, I shall shew, that this dispensation is very congruous and suitable to the divine wisdom. For as it was convenient, that the son of God should assume our nature, and come into the world, and dwell among us, that he might reform mankind, by the purity of his doctrine, and the pattern of his holy life; and likewise that he should suffer death, for the expiation of sin: in such a manner, as might not only advance the mercy, but assert and vindicate the holiness of God, and testify his great hatred and displeasure against sin: so likewise after he had thus abased himself to the lowest degree of meanness and suffering, it was very suitable to the divine goodness, to reward such great sufferings with great glory, by raising him from the dead, and taking him up into Heaven; but it was not fit, when he had left the world, that the great work for which he came into it should be given over, and come to nothing, for want of effectual prosecution, without any fruit and effect of so much sweat and blood. And therefore, though it had pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief, as the prophet expresseth it, yet the divine wisdom hath so order'd things, that after he had made his Soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed, and prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands; that he should see some fruit of the travail of his Soul, and be satisfied, as the prophet foretells, *Isa. liii. 10.* So that as it was expedient, that he should die and depart this life; so it was also requisite afterwards, that he who had begun this great and good work, of the redemption and salvation of man, should take care to have it still prosecuted and carried on: and accordingly, when he was ascended into Heaven, he still promotes the same design, *per vicariam vim spiritus sancti*, as *Tertullian* calls it, by sending the Holy Ghost, as his Deputy, for the managing of this work, and the propagating and establishing of that religion which he had planted in the world.

God foresaw that the greatest part of the *Jewish* nation would reject Christ and his doctrine, and that they would put him to death, as a deceiver and impostor; and because it was expedient, that there should be such an expiatory sacrifice for sin, and that *one man should die for all men*, God was willing to permit his son to be thus dishonourably and unjustly treated, and by wicked hands to be crucified and slain; because he knew very well, how to make the malice of men subservient to his own gracious purpose and design; but yet he was not willing, that so much innocency and goodness should always lie under this reproach; from which if he had not been vindicated, the design of the gospel had fallen to the ground, and presently come to nothing: and therefore, as a reward of his obedience and submission to the will of God, in these dreadful sufferings, in this cruel and dishonourable usage, God furnish'd him with this means of vindicating himself and his doctrine; he gave him power to send his holy spirit into the world, who should distribute miraculous gifts among his apostles and followers, that so both he and his doctrine might be effectually vindicated to the world, and a way made for the more speedy spreading and propagating of it.

So that we plainly see, that the wisdom of God had so order'd this whole dispensation, that every part of it, the birth, the life, and death, and resurrection, and ascension of our Lord, and the sending of the Holy Ghost, are all subservient to one another, and to the whole design, *viz.* the reformation and salvation of mankind.

I have

I have done with the *first* thing I propounded, the necessity of Christ's leaving the world, in order to the coming of the Holy Ghost. I shall now proceed to the

Second Thing I proposed, the happy consequence and effects of the coming of the Holy Ghost. *When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.* There is a great difficulty in these words, and therefore I shall endeavour, as well as I can, to explain them, and then draw some useful inferences from the main doctrine contained in them.

For the explication of them. *And when he*, that is, the Holy Ghost, *the advocate* mention'd before, *shall come*, that is, when the promise of the father concerning the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles shall be accomplish'd, *he shall reprove the world*; the word is ἐλέγξει, which I think may much more properly be render'd *convince*; *he shall convince the world.* And so it is used by this evangelist, Joh. viii. 46. *Which of you*, says our Saviour, *convinceth me of sin?* The very phrase used in the text, *He shall convince the world of sin.* And the same word is also used in the same sense by St. Paul, Tit. i. 9. ἐλέγχειν ἀντιλέγοντας, *to convince gainsayers.* And this certainly is much more agreeable to the scope of this place. For though to *reprove the world of sin*, be a current expression; yet to *reprove the world of righteousness, and of judgment*, are very hard phrases, and I doubt, not intelligible; but to convince an adversary, or to satisfy a court, of the falshood of the accusation and charge brought against the party accused, that is, to vindicate and justify him in his cause, this is the proper act of an *advocate*.

So that the great end of the coming of the Holy Ghost, who is here called *the advocate*, is to *convince the world.* *He shall convince the world*; that is, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who joined in their enmity against Christ, and agreed to put him to death. In these three points, *concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment.* The expression is short, and somewhat obscure, and seems (as Grotius and other learned men have not improbably thought) to allude to the three sorts of causes and actions among the *Jews*.

In the *first*, to publick actions concerning criminal matters, among which was the case of believing or rejecting prophets. *He shall convince the world of sin, because they believed not in me*; that is, he shall convince the world that I was a true prophet sent from God, and no impostor; and consequently, that they were guilty of a great contempt of God, and a horrible murder in putting me to death.

In the *second*, there seems to be an allusion to that sort of private actions, which referr'd to the vindicating of innocency from false testimony and accusation, which are call'd by the name of *righteousness.* *He shall convince the world of righteousness.*

In the *Third*, to that sort of actions, which referr'd to the vindication and punishment of injuries, by way of retaliation upon him that did the injury, and which are call'd κρίσεις, or *judgments.* *He shall convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

But to explain these things more particularly.

1. *He shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me*; that is, of the great sin that they were guilty of, in rejecting this great prophet, and condemning him as a seducer and impostor. And of this they would remarkably be convinc'd, when they should see the predictions of Christ fulfill'd, particularly that of sending the Holy Ghost, and of that terrible vengeance which should afterwards be executed on the *Jewish* nation, for rejecting the son of God. The first of these we find eminently fulfilled upon the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles on the day of *pentecost*, Acts ii. For when the apostles by a sudden inspiration spake with other tongues, the *Jews*, and proselytes, who saw and heard them, were very much amazed at it, ver. 7. And from this miraculous power of the Holy Ghost so visible upon them, St. Peter takes occasion to convince the *Jews*, of their great sin in rejecting the *Messias*, and putting him to death, ver. 32, 33. *This Jesus*, saith he, *both God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses: wherefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.* From whence he concludes, ver. 36. *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* That is, by this you may be convinced, that he whom you crucified

crucified, as a false prophet, was the true *Messias*, Upon this we find, ver. 37. that *when the Jews heard this, they were pricked at their hearts; and said unto Peter, and the rest of the Apostles, Men and Brethren, What shall we do to be saved?* Thus you see the first effect which our Saviour foretold of the coming of the Holy Ghost, fulfill'd in a most eminent manner; for upon this sermon, three thousand of the Jews being convinced of their great sin, in not believing on him, were baptized in his name.

II. He shall convince the world of righteousness; that is, of the innocency of that holy and just person, whom they had condemned as a malefactor. *Of righteousness because I go to the father;* that is, this shall be an evidence to the world of my innocency of those crimes, with which I was charged; that I am taken up into Heaven, and seated at the right hand of God, where I shall remain for ever, out of the reach of their malice and injury. *Because, I go to the father, and ye see me no more;* that is, I shall be there, where their malice cannot reach me. For so he tells the *Pharisees*, when they came to apprehend him, *John vii. 33, 34. Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me: ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come.*

And this vindication of his innocency, was begun by the miracles which immediately follow'd his death, upon which *the Centurion glorified God, saying, Certainly this was the son of God,* as St. Matthew hath it; or, as St. Luke, *This was a righteous man, Luke xxiii. 47.* And not only *the Centurion*, but *all the people*, ver. 48. *And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.* But the great vindication of his innocency was his resurrection, which delivered him from that unjust sentence of death which was past upon him, by raising him up to life again. And this is particularly ascribed to the Holy Ghost, *Rom. i. 4. And was mightily demonstrated to be the son of God, by the spirit of holiness, in his resurrection from the dead.* Especially if we consider, that he was afterwards taken up visibly into Heaven, and there invested with royal power and dignity; of which he gave plentiful evidence, in the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, poured forth upon the apostles: which was a standing demonstration to the world of his innocency and righteousness, since God had taken him up to himself, and set him on his own right hand, and committed all power to him in Heaven and earth.

III. He shall convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. He that usurped the authority of God in the world, and by his instruments had procured Christ to be condemned as a counterfeit king, is himself dethroned and condemned; *The prince of this world is judged.* He that thought to have destroyed the Son of God, by putting him to death, is by this very means destroyed himself. So the Apostle tells us, *Heb. ii. 14. that Christ through his death, that is, upon occasion of his death, and his resurrection from the dead consequent upon it, hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil.*

But most remarkably was *the prince of this world judged and cast out*, when after he had so long usurped the name and worship of God in the world, he was by that mighty power of the spirit of God, which accompanied the preaching of the gospel, thrown out of his kingdom; and where-ever the doctrine of Christ came, the idolatry of the world was not able to stand before it, but fell down, like *Dagon before the ark.* And that this is the meaning of judgment here, is plain from the same evangelist, *chap. xii. 31, 32. Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me.* Where our Saviour explains the judgment of this world, by the casting out Satan out of that power and authority which he had usurped in the heathen world by his idolatrous worship? And therefore our Saviour foretells, that *when he was lifted up from the earth, that is, after he was crucified, and raised from the dead, and taken up into Heaven, he would draw all men to him;* that is, his religion should prevail wonderfully in the world, and be entertained in all nations. And this was most remarkably accomplished, by the wonderful progress of the gospel, and speedy downfall of idolatry in the world, not by might, nor by power, but by the spirit of the Lord. The acknowledgment of *Porphyry*, that bitter enemy of Christianity, as it is reported to us by *Eusebius*,

is very remarkable, *That since one Jesus began to be worshipped, they found no publick benefit from their Gods; their miracles, and their oracles ceased.* This our Saviour foresaw, and foretold, when he appointed and sent forth the seventy disciples to preach the gospel, *Luke x. 18. I beheld Satan like lightning to fall from Heaven,* to express to us the sudden demolishing of his kingdom, and the quick and speedy overthrow of idolatry in the world. And thus I have explained, as briefly as I could, this difficult passage, concerning the Holy Ghost's *convincing the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.*

I shall only draw *two or three* inferences from what hath been delivered, and so conclude.

I. We have great reason to adore the wisdom and goodness of God, in the dispensation of the gospel; that by the sending down of his Holy Spirit, to endow the first publishers of his Heavenly doctrine, with such miraculous powers and gifts, he hath given such abundant testimony to the truth of our religion, and such firm grounds for our faith to rely upon. Had God left the Christian Religion to have been propagated only by its own rational force upon the minds of men, what a slow progress would it in all probability have made? How little belief would the Apostles naked testimony of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, without any other demonstration or proof, have gained while they were alive, much less after their death? how unable would their doctrine, destitute of divine testimony, as well as of all human advantages, have been to have contested with the lusts and interests of men, the wit of the philosophers, and the powers of the princes of this world, which all set themselves against it? How could it, with any hope of success, have encounter'd the malice of men and devils, which was so active and busy, by all possible violence, and by all imaginable arts to root it out of the world? Had the Apostles of our Lord only gone forth, in the strength of their own interest and eloquence, (which in poor and unlearned men must needs be very small) how little could they have contributed to the carrying on so great and difficult a work? Nay, had they not been supported, and born up in their spirits by a mighty strength above their own, had not their commission been sealed by the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, which upon all occasions shew'd forth itself in them, to the wonder and astonishment of men, and was a testimony from Heaven to them, that they were the ambassadors of God to men, specially empower'd and commissioned by him for that work, they could not but have been discourag'd by the opposition and difficulties they met withal, and they might with *Moses* have declined the service, and desired God to send his message by others, that were fitter and better qualified to deliver it; and after some vain and unsuccessful attempts, to propagate the belief of their doctrine, they would have given it over, and been ashamed of their rash undertaking. So *St. Paul* intimates, that had not the mighty power of God accompanied their preaching, and made it effectual to the conversion and salvation of men, they would have been tempted to have been *ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*

But then we must remember, that it is the doctrine of Christ which is thus confirmed, and not the doctrines and traditions of men. For had the concealment of the doctrine of Christ, and the serving of God in an unknown tongue, been any part of the Apostles doctrine, the gift of tongues had not been a confirmation of this doctrine, but a contradiction to it; had they preached transubstantiation, and the renouncing of our senses, in order to the belief of it, miracles could have given no credit to it: for that which depends upon the certainty of sense (as miracles do) cannot be a competent argument, to prove that which is contrary to sense; for that which makes me sure of the miracle which should prove this doctrine, does at the same time make me equally sure that this doctrine is not true. If there were no other evidence, that transubstantiation is no part of the Christian doctrine, this to a wise man would be sufficient, that what proves the one, overthrows the other; and that miracles, which are certainly the best, and highest external proof of Christianity, are the worst proof in the world of transubstantiation, unless a man can renounce his senses at the same time that he relies, upon them; for a man cannot believe a miracle, without, relying upon his senses nor transubstantiation, without renouncing them: and never were any two things so ill coupled together, as the doctrine of Christianity, and that of

transubstantiation, because they draw several ways, and are ready to strangle one another. The main evidence and confirmation of the Christian doctrine, which is miracles, is resolved into the certainty and testimony of our senses; but this evidence is clear and point blank against transubstantiation.

II. The consideration of what hath been said, convinceth men of the great sin of infidelity, and the unreasonableness of it, after so clear conviction and demonstration as God hath given to the world of the truth of Christianity. That the gospel was planted and propagated in the world in so wonderful a manner, and prevailed, notwithstanding all the opposition that was made against it; the remarkable and terrible destruction of *Jerusalem*, according to our Saviour's prediction: the several attempts of rebuilding the temple, particularly by *Julian* the apostate, in despite to Christianity, and to confute our Saviour's prediction, so remarkably frustrated, and resisted from Heaven, by fire flaming out of the foundation, and consuming the workmen, so that they were forced to desist; and this recorded by a heathen historian *Ammianus Marcellinus*: the dispersion of the *Jewish* nation, and their continuing for so many ages separate and distinct from all other people, for a standing accomplishment of our Saviour's prophecy, and a testimony to all ages of the truth of Christianity. These, with many more arguments I might mention, are a clear evidence to any one that does not obstinately wink and shut his eyes against the light, that the doctrine of Christianity came from God.

III. They who believe the gospel, are inexcusable if they do not obey it, and live according to it. This is the great end of all the miracles which God hath wrought for the confirmation of Christianity; that by the belief of the gospel, men might be brought to the obedience of faith, and live conformably to the precepts of that holy religion, which the son of God, by so many miracles, hath planted and preserved in the world. The infidelity of men will be a heavy charge upon them, at the judgment of the great day, and God will condemn them for it: but we that profess to believe the gospel, and live contrary to it, shall not only be condemned by the judgment of God, but by the sentence of our own consciences. Our profession to believe the gospel, will be an aggravation of our disobedience to it, and every article of our creed will be a sore charge against us; and that faith, which was ordained to justify us, will be our great condemnation at the great day.

Therefore, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* argues, *We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we fall away*, either by infidelity or impiety of life; for if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, that is, if disobedience to the law of *Moses* was so severely punished, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward: how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which was at first spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed afterwards by them that heard him? God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. For, if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised *Moses*, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment shall we be thought worthy, if we tread under foot the son of God; and count the blood of the covenant, whereby we are sanctified, an unholy thing, and offer despite to the spirit of grace! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But beloved, I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak, and that you are not of the number of those, who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of your souls.

S E R M O N CXLV.

Of the coming of the Holy Ghost, as a guide to the Apostles.

JOHN xvi. 12, 13.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.

OUR Saviour having before declared to his disciples the great expediency of his leaving the world, in order to the coming of the Holy Ghost, *ver. 7.* he tells them in the next place, what the office of the Holy Ghost should be. In reference to Christ, he should be an advocate: and in reference to them, he should be a guide or teacher.

1. In reference to Christ, he should be *an advocate* to plead the cause of Christ and of his doctrine, and to vindicate them to the world, *ver. 8, 9, 10, 11.* And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believed not in me: of righteousness, because I go to my father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. All which I have formerly handled and explained at large.

2. In regard to the Apostles; the Holy Ghost is promis'd to be *a guide and teacher*, to reveal to them, and instruct them in some truths which our Saviour, whilst he was with them, had not so fully acquainted them withal, because of their present incapacity and unfitness at that time to receive them. *I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.*

In the handling of these words, I shall do these *two* things.

First, I shall endeavour to explain the meaning of them.

Secondly, I shall draw some inferences from them.

First, I shall begin with the explication of them; in order whereunto, it will be requisite to enquire into these *two* things.

I. What those things probably were, which our Saviour did not reveal and declare to his disciples, because they could not then bear them.

II. What is the meaning of this promise, that *the Spirit of Truth shall guide them into all truth.*

I. What those things probably were, which our Saviour did not reveal and declare to his disciples, because they could not then bear them. Our Saviour does not express particularly what those things were, nor can it be expected he should have done so; for then he had declared them to them, which he tells us he would not do: but the text gives us *two* marks to direct our enquiry concerning them.

1. That they were such things as the disciples at that time were incapable of. *I have many things yet to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.* So that it seems they were such truths, as the disciples were prejudiced against upon some account or other; most probably by reason of their education in the *Jewish* religion, and some principles which they had imbib'd from the teachers and interpreters of their law.

2. They were such truths as, after the Holy Ghost did descend upon them, they should be instructed in. So that if we can find out what those truths were which the disciples were fully instructed in after the coming of the Holy Ghost, which either were not at all, or not so clearly revealed to them before, because of their prejudice against them; we may then certainly conclude, that these were the things which our Saviour here speaks of, when he says, *I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

And upon enquiry into this matter by these *two* marks, it will appear that they were principally these *three*.

1. That our Saviour did not design the setting up of any temporal kingdom in this world: but that his kingdom and government was to be spiritual, not managed by any external force or compulsion, or by laws, the violation whereof he would vindicate by the temporal sword; but by laws, the sanction and penalty whereof should take hold of the minds and spirits of men, and relate unto another world.

And this was a truth which the disciples were incapable of, whilst our Saviour was here upon earth; against which they were so prejudiced by the general tradition which the *Jews* had entertained, that the *Messias* was to be a great temporal prince, and to subdue all nations to them, that they were in a continual expectation, when he would lay aside his mean condition, and appear in that glory and majesty which they expected; when like the Sun he would break through all those clouds wherewith he was muffled and obscured, and shine forth in his full strength and glory. For it appears very plain, that they had an hankering expectation after some such thing, and that after he had so plainly declared to them his death and sufferings. For the text tells us, that *they could not understand these things, but they were hid from them*; that is, they were so possess'd with the conceit of his temporal kingdom, that they could not imagine that any such thing could befall him. And to shew how deeply this conceit was rooted in them, immediately after Christ had told them so plainly of his sufferings, *James* and *John* put up a petition to him, that one of them might sit on his right hand, and the other on his left in his kingdom. This opinion of his temporal kingdom did so run in their minds, that they could not understand any thing that seemed to contradict it.

And though our Saviour had so expressly declared, but a little before his death, that *his kingdom was not of this world*, and therefore he should make no resistance to the violence that was offered to him, yea, though the disciples saw him put to death; yet they did not lay aside this opinion, but still expected that he would rise again, and then begin his kingdom in this world. For so we find the two disciples discoursing together, as they were going to *Emmaus*, *Luke* xxiv. 21. *We trusted*, say they one to another, *that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel*. And after his resurrection, this was that which lay uppermost in their minds, and which their thoughts were still upon, as appears by that question which they put to him just before his ascension, as *St. Luke* tells us, *Acts* i. 6. *When therefore they were come together, they asked of him, saying, Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*

No wonder then, if being possess'd with so strong a prejudice about this matter, our Saviour did not strive to convince them of it, whilst he was upon earth; because they could not then have born it: but we find that after the coming of the Holy Ghost, they were fully instructed in it, and quitted the conceit which they had formerly entertained, and were satisfied that he was ascended into Heaven, and *set at the right hand of the majesty of God*, and that from thence he had sent his spirit to instruct and govern his church, and that this was the kingdom of the *Messias*.

They were so possess'd before with another apprehension, that they would almost have rejected him, had they understood that the *Messias* was to have no other kingdom than this; but after that glorious confirmation was given to him, by his resurrection from the dead, and visible ascension into Heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost in such wonderful and miraculous gifts, then at last they were capable of understanding and receiving this truth, which could not sink into their hearts before.

2. Another truth which our Saviour here probably intended, was the abrogating the *Jewish* dispensation. And this likewise they must needs be extremely prejudiced against; because their law was given by God, and look'd upon by them, not as a temporary, but a perpetual institution. And this truth we find that the Apostles were afterwards instructed in, when the Holy Ghost was come upon them. And therefore in the council at *Jerusalem*, the Apostles released the *Gentiles* from the observance of *Moses* his law, as a thing which they were perfectly instructed in by the Holy Ghost. *Acts* xv. 28. *It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, &c.*

3. Another truth which our Saviour here probably intended, was, that the salvation of the *Messias* belonged to the *Gentiles*, as well as to the *Jews*. The

Jews had a strong conceit of their own privileges, and look'd upon all the world, besides themselves, as a company of reprobates, that had no share or interest in the promise of God, or in those great blessings, which their *Messias* was to bring to the world. And we find that the disciples had so deeply imbib'd this prejudice in their education, that they wonder'd at our Saviour, when they found him talking with the *Samaritan* woman. And though before his ascension he had given them an express command to *go and teach all nations*, yet it seems 'twas a good while before they understood this command in the latitude in which our Saviour intended it. For 'tis plain from the history of the *Acts*, that 'till *Peter* was sent to *Cornelius*, and better instructed in this matter by a vision from Heaven, they had not at all preach'd the gospel to the *Gentiles*, being persuaded that it was unlawful to do it; but by the command of our Saviour to *go and teach all nations*, they understood that they were to preach to the *Jews* dispersed in all nations. But after this vision to *Peter*, and when they saw that the Holy Ghost fell upon the *Gentiles*, in the same manner that it had done upon *them*, then and not before they were instructed in this truth.

That these are all, or some of the principal of those truths which our Saviour here means, when he says, that he had yet many things to say unto his disciples, which they could not then bear, does I hope sufficiently appear; because they were such truths, as the disciples were most vehemently prejudiced against, and which afterwards they were fully instructed in by the descent of the Holy Ghost, and not before.

II. I shall enquire what is the meaning of this promise in the text, that *the spirit of truth will guide them into all truth*.

That these words are not to be understood in the greatest latitude which they are capable of, I think any one will grant. For certainly no man ever supposed, that our Saviour here promis'd that his spirit should lead his disciples into the knowledge of all natural truths, and instruct them in all the depths of philosophy, and in the mysteries of all arts and sciences. Plain it is then, that some limitation must be put upon this general and universal promise of *leading them into all truth*. All the difficulty is, how far it is to be limited, and what bounds are to be set to this general promise?

Now in all reason it ought to be limited by the context; and if we go that way, which is the only reasonable way of limiting general words, then the plain meaning of this promise will be this; that because our Saviour had forbore to reveal several truths to his disciples, which they were not then capable of, he would supply this difficulty afterwards by his Holy Spirit, who after that he was risen from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, should descend upon them, and instruct them fully in those truths, which he, in condescension to their prejudice and incapacity, had in his lifetime forbore to do; that is, he would take a fitter season to instruct them fully by his spirit, in all those truths, which, whilst he was upon earth, they were not so capable of receiving. *I have yet many things to say unto you*; that is, besides what I have already declared to you, there are several other things, which ye are not now so capable of receiving, which the Holy Ghost, whom I will send in my name, shall take a more convenient time to instruct you in.

And our Saviour speaks much to the same purpose, *John xv. 25, 26*. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you: but the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things; that is, he shall make up and supply what is wanting, and instruct you in those things which ye are not now so capable of receiving.*

I shall now, in the *second* place, make some inferences from the words thus explained. As,

First, That it is not necessary at all times to preach all truths, which are of importance to be * known. For these were great truths which our Saviour forbore for some time to reveal to his disciples, and were of great importance to the planting and propagating of the gospel; and yet he thought it better at present to forbear the pressing of them, than by an unseasonable declaration of them to do no good, but only stir up prejudice against himself, and those other necessary truths which he had instructed them in.

* *Utile se
at taceatur
aliquid ve-
rum, prop-
ter incapa-
ces.* Aug.
Persev.
l. ii. c. 16.

Secondly, That there ought to be a due regard had to what people can bear; and where men are possess'd with a violent prejudice against some truths, we ought in imitation of our Saviour's example, patiently to expect and endeavour the removal of that prejudice; and first to apply all fitting means for the conquering and subduing it, before we expose truth to be rejected by those who have taken up a violent prejudice against it. And this rule holds universally, where we have to deal with persons who are tractable and willing to learn, but do at present lye under some prejudice of education, or some false principles which they entertained unawares, which by time and patience, and a gradual progress of truth may be removed, but are not to be conquer'd and borne down at once. There are some prejudices which cannot be pluck'd out of the minds of men at once, but yet may be so loosened by degrees, that they will fall off of themselves; as there are many knots unty'd with patience and leisure, which by a violent pulling are fix'd so much the faster.

And this course we find the Apostles took, in imitation of our Saviour, 1 Cor. iii. 2. *I have fed you*, saith St. Paul there, *with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it.* He was contented to instil truth into them by degrees, and as they were capable of it. The minds of most men are strait and narrow, and cannot receive that at once, which may be instill'd by degrees; like narrow-mouth'd vessels, into which liquor may be pour'd by degrees; but if we strive to put it in faster than they can receive it, it runs by, and is lost.

But where men are not of a teachable disposition, but the prejudice against truth is wilful and affected, there we are bound to propose great and important truths to men, notwithstanding their prejudice against them, and to urge upon them those things which are necessary and fit for them to know, *whether they will bear, or whether they will forbear.* And if in that case they will resist truth fairly and with full evidence proposed to them, they do it at their peril. God is not obliged to do more, than to offer men sufficient means of conviction; and if they will be obstinate and pertinacious, God is not bound in that case to provide any farther remedy.

III. Another inference, and which I principally intended from this text is this, that from the explication which I have given of this promise of our Saviour's, of sending his spirit to lead his disciples into all truth, it very plainly appears, that there is no ground or colour of ground from this text, for the pretended infallibility of the *Romish* church: and yet this is one of those texts, which their great masters of controversy do urge us withal, for the proof of their infallibility; a sign that they are much at a loss for good arguments to prove it by, otherwise they would never summon a text so very remote from their purpose. And how far this text is from proving their church to be infallible, will very clearly appear, if we consider these *five* things.

1. That the plain and obvious sense of this promise (as I have already shewn) is this; that because there was some truths fit for the apostles to know, which they were not at that time capable of receiving, whilst our Saviour was upon earth, therefore after his ascension he would send his Holy Spirit to instruct them in those things, and to guide them into all those truths, which it was not then seasonable to acquaint them withal. Now by what art can any man infer from hence, that our Saviour would give the infallible assistance of his Holy Spirit to the church of *Rome*, to the end of the world?

2. Let it also be consider'd, that this promise was made personally to the Apostles, and therefore ought not to be extended beyond them, unless it evidently appear, that it ought to be so extended; unless it evidently appear either from the tenour of the promise, or from some other reason, that it was the intention of the promiser, that this should equally extend to others as well as to them. 'Tis true, that this promise was made to the Apostles, not merely for their own sakes, but for the benefit of the church; for God thereby promiseth, that his spirit should reveal those truths to them, that they might declare them to the church: but it does not from hence follow, that any other persons, in succeeding ages of the church, should have the same immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost which the Apostles had; because, being once reveal'd to the church, there was no need of a new revelation of those truths in every age.

3. There

3. There is nothing in the tenour of this promise, nor any other reason, from whence it may appear, that this promise ought to be extended any farther, than to the persons to whom it was made; because this promise was made with a peculiar respect to the Apostles, and their employment, and for reasons proper to the first state of the church; and not common to all ages; therefore it cannot with reason be extended to all after-ages of the church.

Let it be granted then, that this promise taken together with other promises of our Saviour made to the Apostles, does signify an infallible assistance to them, so as to secure them from error, in the delivery of the doctrine of Christ; yet why should any church afterwards, much less the church of *Rome* apart from all others, pretend to be heir-general to the Apostles in this infallible assistance? the Apostles gave sufficient evidence of their infallibility, by the miracles which they wrought; and let the pope and general councils give this testimony of their infallibility, and we are ready to acknowledge it. There was reason why this assistance should be afforded to the Apostles in the first preaching of the gospel; but after it was planted, and the doctrine of Christianity consign'd to writing, there was no need of such an infallible assistance afterwards.

But they of the church of *Rome* tell us, that this infallible assistance was necessary afterwards for the perpetuity of the church, and for the government of it, and for the decision of controversies amongst Christians. To this I answer *two* things:

First, If this infallible assistance be necessary to these ends, then it is also necessary, that it should have been declared, what that church or society is, which was to be so infallible; else how should men know, whither to have recourse for the government of the church, and the decision of controversies in matters of difficulty? As good the Christian church be without infallibility, as that no man should know where it is.

And will any man have the confidence to say, that God hath any where in scripture declared, that the church of *Rome* hath this infallibility annex'd to her? Hath the scripture any where told us, that the church of *Rome* is the catholic church, that is, that a *particular* church is the church *universal*; if we should suppose the universal church to be infallible in matters of faith and practice, is it any where said in the bible, that the *Pope*, or a *general council*, or *both together* are infallible? Are we any where there directed to have recourse to *Rome*, and the bishop of that city, either with or without a general council, for the determination of controversies in religion? And yet if infallibility be necessary for the ends mentioned, then certainly 'tis as necessary, that we should have been plainly directed where to find it, that we may make use of it upon occasion. What man living can persuade himself, that the belief of the infallibility of the *Romish* church, that is, of the Pope, or of the Pope and council, should be so fundamental an article of faith as they would make it; and yet that neither Christ nor his Apostles should say one word about it? How comes it to pass, that when there were so many schisms and dissensions in the primitive church, St. *Paul* should never so much as once mention this effectual remedy of all those evils, to send them to St. *Peter*, who was the only infallible judge of controversies? If Christ had appointed this way, then certainly St. *Paul* could not have been ignorant of it. Besides that it would have been an excellent direction to the church in after-ages, what to have done in the like cases; if our Saviour or any of his Apostles would have given us the least signification, that the heir of infallibility had been fix'd at *Rome*, and that thither we were to have recourse for the deciding of all differences in religion.

Especially it must needs seem very wonderful, that St. *Paul* in his epistle to the *Roman* church, should not acquaint them what a singular privilege that church had above all other churches; that it was the seat of infallibility, and that the bishop of that church was the great judge of controversies, and that there could no difference arise among them, about any matter of faith, but they might speedily have it decided from that chair. Nay, on the contrary, there are shrewd intimations given, that the church of *Rome* herself should apostatize from the faith, and that her haughtiness would be her ruin. *Rom. xi. 20, 21.* where speaking of the *Jews*, that were *broken off by their unbelief*, he gives this caution to the church of *Rome*, *Well: because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith.*

Be

Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches; take heed lest he also spare not thee. Be not high-minded, but fear. What needed they to fear, who had the privilege of infallibility? Their faith must needs be unshaken. But St. Paul seems to think that church to be in as much danger of falling from the faith, as any other. From whence we may certainly conclude, that he knew nothing of its infallibility. Nay he seems to have foreseen their arrogant pretence to it, and that that very thing would be the occasion of their falling, when he gives them that caution, *Be not high-minded, but fear.* For what greater instance could their possibly be of a proud and high mind, than to assume to themselves to be infallible? But,

Secondly, The ends mentioned may be sufficiently attained without infallibility. As for the perpetuity of the church, that may continue to the end of the world, by virtue of the infallibility of Christ's promise, though there be no infallibility either in the church of *Rome*, or any where else. For setting aside Christ's promise, the church may fail; and his promise signifies only that it *shall not* fail, not that it *cannot*. All that can be inferr'd from the promise of Christ, concerning the perpetuity of the church, is only the certainty of the event, but not the infallibility of the cause; not that the church shall be *infallible*, but only that it shall *not fail*.

In like manner for the government of the church, and decision of controversies, there is no need of infallibility; because the church may be govern'd well enough, as other societies are, without an infallibility: and all controversies that are necessary to be decided, may be decided by the infallible rule of faith, *the Holy Scriptures*, which are plain in all things necessary; and there is no necessity, that controversies about matters not necessary should be decided.

To conclude this point; if the pope and a general council be the seat of infallibility, (which is the most general opinion in the church of *Rome*) then how was the Christian church govern'd, and controversies decided, before the council of *Nice*, which was the first general council; that is, for three hundred years? And if the church did well enough for three hundred years without an infallible judge, this a demonstration that there is no absolute need of it.

4. This promise here in the text signifies a revelation of some new truths to the Apostles, which they were not instructed in before, and therefore cannot belong to any church in after-ages. For the church of *Rome* her self does not pretend to any revelation of objects of faith not known before, and therefore can challenge nothing by virtue of this promise.

5. Suppose infallible assistance were here promised to the church in all ages, and that the church of *Rome* were the Catholic church, and that the pope and a council were the *Roman* church, and consequently the Catholic, I say, suppose all this granted; yet the church of *Rome*, according to her principles, can never be certain that this is the meaning of this promise. For they profess to receive both the scripture and the interpretation of it from the church, and consequently to believe this text to be scripture, and this to be the meaning of this text, because their church which is infallible tells them so: and if so, then they do not believe their church to be infallible, because this text says so; but they believe this to be the meaning of this text, because their church is infallible and tells them so. So that of necessity they must first believe their church to be infallible, before they can prove it from this or any other text; and consequently, they must either prove things in a circle, or else take the meaning of this text of the infallibility of their church for granted, without any proof. And thus much may suffice to have spoken to this text.

S E R M O N CXLVI.

Of the ordinary influence of the Holy Ghost, on the
minds of Christians.

*The First
Sermon on
this Text.*

JOHN vii. 39.

But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.

OUR blessed Saviour (who used from all sorts of objects and occurrences to discourse of heavenly and spiritual things) being present at the feast of *Tabernacles*, in which it was the custom of the *Jews*, from the fountain *Siloam*, to fetch water with great pomp and ceremony, and to bring it into the temple with sound of trumpet, and to offer it, singing those words of the prophet *Isaiab*, *They shall draw waters with joy out of the wells of salvation*: I say, our Saviour being present at this feast, takes occasion from these waters, which they brought into the temple with so much joy, to proclaim those spiritual benefits which Christians should be made partakers of by the Holy Ghost, and which are in scripture represented by *waters flowing from a living fountain*. In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture saith, that is, according to the tenour of several passages in the prophets, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*; and then the evangelist adds, by way of farther explication of our Saviour's meaning, *But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*. In which words we have these three things considerable.

First, The gift it self; which is here called *the Spirit*, or *the Holy Ghost*.

Secondly, The persons upon whom this gift was to be conferr'd; and those are *believers*, such as should believe and embrace the gospel. *This he spake of the spirit, which they that believe on him should receive*.

Thirdly, The particular time and season of the first conferring of this gift: and this was not to be till after our Saviour's ascension into Heaven, and being receiv'd up into glory, implied in those words, *The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*. I shall as briefly as I can explain these three things.

First, The gift itself, which is here called *the Spirit*, or *the Holy Ghost*. By which we are to understand a special power and presence of the Holy Ghost with believers, the immediate operation and assistance of the Divine Spirit communicated and imparted to them; and this comprehends in it these two things.

1. Those extraordinary and miraculous gifts which were bestowed upon the Apostles and primitive Christians, in order to the planting and propagating of the Christian religion in the world, and for the use and benefit of the church, while it was under persecution, and destitute of all secular countenance and assistance, and of those ordinary human advantages which are sufficient to preserve and maintain a religion, after it is once firmly settled, and generally entertained. And these gifts were in a very remarkable manner, and such as no religion that ever was in the world can pretend to the like, conferred upon the first preachers of the Christian doctrine, and planters of it in the world; and they were in a high degree necessary to give credit and countenance to this religion at its first appearance, and to awaken the drowsy world to an attentive consideration of it, to conquer the prejudices of men against a new religion, and to support and bear up the teachers and publishers of this doctrine, against that violent opposition and persecution which would certainly be raised against it, and likewise to supply the want of secular power and authority to give countenance and assistance to it.

For these and such like ends and reasons, God was pleased at that time not only to endue the Apostles and first preachers of Christianity with all sorts of miraculous powers, but even the generality of Christians with several extraordinary gifts; and also to accompany the outward preaching of the gospel with a very extraordinary influence of God's Spirit upon the minds of men; to make way for the entertainment of it, by opening their understandings, and enlightning their minds to discern spiritual things, by subduing their prejudices, and conquering their lusts, and the vitious and perverse inclinations of their wills, to the obedience of faith, by raising their minds above the world, above all the allurements and enjoyments of it, and above all the threatnings and terrours of it, and giving men courage and resolution to embrace this profession, and with constancy to adhere to it, notwithstanding all the dangers and sufferings which attended it.

I shall not now treat of these miraculous gifts particularly, having had frequent occasion heretofore * to discourse at large of the nature, and several kinds, and particular use and ends of them. I shall only observe to you, that this power of miracles, and this extraordinary influence of the spirit of God upon the minds of men, was not intended always to continue in the church, but only so long as there should be need and occasion for it, that is, till the christian religion was fully propagated and planted, and the fury of persecution abated, and till christianity had the favour and countenance of the civil authority, and the prejudice of education on its side. For when by this means it came to stand upon equal terms of advantage with other religions, God then withdrew his extraordinary assistance, and left it to be maintained and supported by more human and ordinary ways, and in a great measure by its own rational force and power upon the minds of men.

* See Vol I.
Serm. XX.
and this
Vol Serm.
CXLIII

II. The gift of the Holy Ghost doth likewise signify and comprehend in it a more ordinary and gentle influence of God's spirit upon the minds of men, to all holy and good purposes: by which I mean, an immediate operation and assistance of the Holy Ghost afforded to men, to relieve the weakness and impotence of human nature, to help and strengthen us to the performance of what the gospel requires of us. And this I shall have occasion to explain more particularly, when I have gone over the other parts of the text.

Secondly, You have here the qualification of the persons who were to be made partakers of this gift, and that is, *believing* and embracing the gospel. *This be spake of the spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*

The extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the spirit were not conferred on any but those who embraced the faith of Christ, and made profession of the christian religion. Not that all christians were endowed with those extraordinary gifts, much less all in an equal degree. But they were distributed, as St. Paul tells us, in such manner and measure as the wisdom of God thought fit, and as was most for the use and edification of the Church. But all were partakers of the Holy Ghost in respect of his more ordinary influence and assistance, and this gift all christians receiv'd upon their embracing and owning the christian religion. Thus *Acts* v. 32. *The Holy Ghost is said to be given by God to them that obey him.* And *Gal.* iii. 14. *We are said to receive the promise of the spirit through faith.* And *Ephes.* i. 13. *In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.*

And because this profession of faith was made in baptism, whereby men are solemnly initiated into the christian religion, hence it is, that this gift of the Holy Ghost is in scripture promised, and said to be conferred in baptism, *Acts* ii. 38. *Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* And *Heb.* vi. 4. the apostle speaking of those who had solemnly taken upon them the profession of christianity, thus describes them, *Those who were once enlighten'd, that is, baptized; (for so Baptism is frequently by the antients call'd Illumination) those who were once baptized, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; implying that this heavenly gift, of God's holy spirit was conferr'd upon christians in their baptism; and hence it is, that baptizing with water and the Holy Ghost were frequently put together, water being the outward symbol, and the Holy Ghost the inward grace, conferred*

in baptism. So likewise the Apostle joins together, *the laver of regeneration*, and *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, Tit. iii. 5.

All which consider'd, I cannot imagine why so great a scruple should be made of those expressions which our church useth in the office of baptism of *children*; *being regenerated and born again by baptism*, and *being thereby made the children of God*, and *heirs of eternal life*. That is, by entering into this covenant, they are put into a state and capacity of all the blessings of the gospel, if they do not neglect the condition which that covenant requires on their part. For all this is in truth no other but what the scripture says of baptism, and ascribes to it, when it calls it, *the laver of regeneration*, when it declares the spirit to be conferred in baptism, and when it says, that *as many as are led by the spirit of God, are the sons of God*, and that *the sons of God, are heirs of eternal life*. So that I cannot see that our church, in her highest expressions concerning the benefits and effects of baptism, says any thing but what is very agreeable, both to the expressions and sense of scripture. And thus not only the antient fathers spake of this matter, but so likewise do all the liturgies of the reformed churches, in the offices and forms appointed by them for the administration of baptism; so that it seems a very affected singularity to take exceptions at such expressions as have constantly been, and still are generally used in all christian churches. The

Third Thing considerable in the text is, the particular time and season of the conferring of this gift of the Holy Ghost; and that was after our Saviour's ascension into heaven, and being received up into glory, implied in those words, *The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*; signifying to us, that this effusion of the spirit was not to be till after our Saviour's ascension into heaven.

But was not the Holy Ghost given to the prophets of old? and were not good men in former ages of the world under the ordinary influence and assistance of the divine grace and spirit? why is it then said that the *Holy Ghost was not yet given*?

The answer to this is easy, that our Saviour here speaks of that general and plentiful effusion of the Holy Ghost which was promised to *the latter days*, that is, to the *gospel age*; the like to which, both for the universal communication of this gift, and for the extraordinary degree and measure of its participation, had never been in the world before; and of this it is, that the *Evangelist* speaks, when he dates the time of it, from after our Saviour's ascension into heaven. Now why the dispensation of this gift of the Holy Ghost was particularly limited to this time, tho' it is not necessary we should know the reasons of it, yet there are *three* obvious ones, which may give us full satisfaction in this matter.

1. Because it was not so necessary before in our Saviour's life-time: for during his continuance in the world, and conversation with his disciples, his presence supplied all other defects; but when he left them, they were, as he calls them, *orphans*, destitute of help, comfort, and protection; and therefore it was requisite, that upon his departure from them, this *comforter* and *advocate* should come to *abide and continue with them for ever*. But this does not seem to reach fully the reason assigned in the text, why *the spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*. Therefore,

2. It seems very convenient, not only that our Saviour should be visibly taken up into heaven, but that after he was ascended thither, he should give some remarkable testimony to the world, of the power and dignity to which he was there advanced; and that as a king he should give some evidence of his authority and majesty, at his solemn inauguration into his kingdom, by dispensing plentifully spiritual gifts, as the princes of this world are wont at such a time to scatter temporal favours and benefits. And this the scripture takes notice of, as an evidence and testimony of his royal dignity, and glorious exaltation at the right hand of God, *Acts v. 31, 32. Him hath God exalted* (speaking of our blessed Lord) *with his own right hand, to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him*. Where you see that the gift of the Holy Ghost is mentioned as a testimony of our Saviour's being exalted as a prince at the right hand of God. But more expressly St. Paul, *Eph. iv. 8.*

applied to our Saviour these words of the *Psalmist*, *Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

3. After our Saviour's ascension, there was the greatest occasion that ever was for the bestowing of this gift of the Holy Ghost, considering what kind of persons they were that were appointed to publish the gospel to the world; and that this great work being to be carried on by instruments in all appearance so weak, and mean, and contemptible, there was an absolute necessity of an extraordinary testimony to be given from Heaven to the divinity of this new doctrine, and of a Divine Power and Presence going along with it, to encourage and support those weak instruments in carrying on of this work, against the mighty opposition and persecution it was likely to meet withal, and against such difficulties and obstacles as were plainly insuperable by any human power and means. For as there never was a work of greater consequence and difficulty than this undertaking; so could this Divine power and assistance never have appeared and manifested it self, upon a fitter and more worthy occasion. Since our Saviour, according to the wise counsel of God, intended; that after his ascension into Heaven, his gospel should be published to the world, it was highly requisite that the minds of men should be prepared for it, and way made for the more ready entertainment and easy passage of it, by some signal testimony of the Divine Presence attending the first publishers of it, and by circumstances, though not so full of terror and amazement as those which did accompany the giving of the law, yet really of greater force and efficacy, and more apt to convince the world of the truth of this doctrine, and to insinuate it more effectually into the hearts and consciences of men.

And now that I have given you a brief account of the three particulars; which from this text offer themselves to our consideration, I shall return back to that which I intended more especially to insist upon, and that is, the more ordinary influence of the Holy Spirit of God upon the minds of those who believe and embrace the Christian doctrine; and this I shall endeavour to explain to you under these *four* heads.

First, I shall open to you the nature of it.

Secondly, The necessity of it, to enable us to perform the condition of the gospel-covenant.

Thirdly, The blessed effects of it.

Fourthly, The extent of it as to persons and times.

First, I shall endeavour to open to you the nature of this gift of the Holy Ghost; understanding by it the ordinary influence of the Holy Spirit of God upon the hearts and minds of believers. And I doubt not but that the Scripture means by it an immediate influence and operation of the Holy Spirit of God upon the minds of men, an inward power, strength and assistance communicated to Christians, to all the purposes of holiness and obedience, enabling them to be such *manner of persons in all holy conversation and godliness* as the gospel requires: and not only that this strength and assistance is offer'd and afforded to us, *to work in us, both to will and to do* all that is necessary to salvation, if we put no obstacle thereto, and do not resist the Spirit of God, and the blessed motions of it; but likewise that this power does continually dwell and reside in all true Christians, if we do not grieve the Spirit of God; and provoke him to withdraw himself from us.

And this is sufficiently declared in several places of the new testament, where we are said to be *assisted by a Divine Power*, and *strengthen'd with all might by the Spirit in the inner man*; *to walk in the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit*; and by the Spirit to *mortify the deeds of the flesh*; and likewise in those texts, wherein the Spirit of God is said to *work mightily in them that believe, to dwell in them, to sanctify and renew them*, with many such like expressions, frequently to be met with in the writings of the Apostles. By all which, unless we offer notorious violence to the plain and obvious sense of them, we must necessarily understand something more than the confirmation which was given to the Christian doctrine; by the miracles that were wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost; which doctrine being thus confirm'd, does by way of rational conviction work upon the minds of men, and change their wills, without any internal operation and immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost. Such a remote influence of the Spirit of God upon men as this is, does by no means seem to answer the fullness of those phrases and

expressions, which the scripture so frequently useth concerning it; and if any man do but seriously weigh and consider them, nothing less than an immediate influence of the Spirit of God upon our Hearts, and a real strength and power thereby communicated to us, can be imagin'd to satisfy the proper sense and meaning of the several expressions which I have mention'd.

And that the scripture, by the promise of the Spirit, and the various expressions concerning it, does mean this ordinary assistance common to all Christians in all times, and not only the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, which were peculiar to the first ages of Christianity, seems to me to be very plain; because the scripture makes the gift of the Spirit to be common to all believers, and to be given to all that are baptized, and this in all ages of the church; as appears from those words of St. Peter, Acts ii. 38, 39. *Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* This promise is the promise of the Holy Ghost, which he says is made to them and their posterity, that in all succeeding ages should be gained to the faith of Christ. So that this promise of the Holy Ghost, which St. Peter speaks of, and declares to be conferr'd in baptism, does not respect only the first ages of Christianity, but all succeeding generations; and therefore cannot be understood of the power of miracles, because that is long since ceased in the Christian church.

And this appears yet more evidently, in that the Scripture makes the want of the Spirit a sign that a man is no true and sincere Christian: *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*; and on the contrary, makes our having the Spirit of God, a mark of a child of God; *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God*: but our Saviour hath assured us, that men may have the miraculous gifts of the Spirit of God, *may prophecy in Christ's name, and cast out devils in his name, and in his name do many wondrous works, and yet be workers of iniquity, and shut out of the kingdom of God.* And on the other hand, men may not have these miraculous gifts, and yet be *the children of God*. But this will yet more fully appear, if we consider in the

Second place, The great necessity of such an immediate influence and assistance of the Spirit of God, to enable Christians to perform the condition of the covenant of the gospel. The great corruption and degeneracy of human nature, and the impotency and weakness consequent thereupon, is not only matter of Divine revelation, but hath always been the general apprehension and acknowledgment, and the sad complaint of the wisest part of mankind; and indeed, every man may feel it in himself, and observe it in others. Now for our relief and recovery out of this miserable and degenerate state, God was pleas'd in great pity and commiseration to mankind, to send his Son into the world, to reveal his will and our duty a-new to us, for our direction in the way to life and happiness; and by the sacrifice of himself to make a perfect expiation of sin; and to proclaim forgiveness of sins to us, for the encouragement of our repentance, and return to our duty; and, in a word, to offer new terms of life and happiness to us, upon the conditions of faith, and repentance, and new obedience.

But after all this is done for us, we are still without strength, our nature being depraved, and sunk into that impotency and weakness, that without the powerful assistance of divine grace, we are utterly unable to perform those most equal and reasonable conditions which the gospel requires of us, *being, as the Scripture expresseth it, dead in trespasses and sins, and estranged from the life of God, through the darkness that is in us, and the blindness of our hearts*; being enslaved to vicious habits, and having a carnal mind, which is enmity to God, and renders us incapable to receive or relish divine and spiritual things. So that notwithstanding all that our blessed Saviour hath done and suffer'd for us, and all the merciful overtures of pardon and happiness, which the Gospel makes to us, all this will signify nothing to our benefit and advantage, unless our impotency be relieved, and new life and strength be conveyed to us, to awaken and excite us to that which is good, to enable us to mortify and subdue our evil and corrupt inclinations, to break off our vicious habits, and to walk in the ways of God's commandments. For *we are not sufficient of our selves, as of our selves, for any of these things; but our sufficiency*

ciency is of God. Without Christ we can do nothing; and it is only through him strengthening of us, that we are able to do all those things which are necessary to be done by us, in order to the obtaining of that happiness and salvation which the gospel hath promised, and our Saviour hath purchased for us. And therefore our merciful Redeemer, that he might not leave his work imperfect, hath sent his blessed Spirit into our hearts, to enlighten the eyes of our minds, and to open and dispose our understandings for the receiving of divine and spiritual truths; to conquer likewise the perverseness and stubbornness of our wills, and to set us at liberty from the slavery of our lusts; (for where the Spirit of God is, as St. Paul tells us, there is liberty;) to renew our natures, and to purify our hearts, to mortify our corrupt affections, and to assist us to every good word and work; to strengthen us against temptations, to support us under sufferings and persecutions, and in a word, to keep us by this mighty power of God, and gracious assistance of his Holy Spirit, through faith unto salvation.

So that whosoever shall but duly weigh and consider his own darkness and ignorance, the strange and unreasonable prejudices of a corrupt mind against divine truth, and against the practice of holiness and virtue, the strong bias of mens natural inclinations to that which is evil, the mighty force and power of evil and inveterate habits within us, and the strength and violence of manifold temptations without us, together with the great difficulties and discouragements of piety and virtue, especially when they are attended with grievous sufferings, and fiery tryals, for righteousness sake; I say, he that considers all this, will easily discern, and readily acknowledge, how great a necessity there is of the grace and assistance of God's Holy Spirit, to all the purposes of a firm faith, and a sincere repentance, and a constant and universal obedience to the holy laws and precepts of the gospel, to rescue us from the power and dominion of sin, to raise us to a new life, to engage us in an holy course, and to fortify our resolutions against sin, and to enable us to persevere, and patiently continue in doing and suffering the will of God.

'Tis this gracious influence, and continual assistance of God's Holy Spirit residing and dwelling in us, which secures all the other blessings and benefits of the gospel to us, and conducts us safely through all the temptations of this world, and the difficulties of a christian course, to the end of our faith, the eternal salvation of our souls. For which reason, the spirit of God dwelling in good men, and evidencing it self by its genuine fruits and effects, the graces and virtues of a good life, is said to be the pledge and earnest of our future inheritance, and of a blessed resurrection to eternal life, and to seal us up to the day of redemption, Rom. viii. 11. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. For the same reason the apostle makes the Spirit of God, by which christians are govern'd and led, to be the mark of their adoption, and being the children of God, and heirs of eternal life. Ver. 14. For as many as are led by the spirit of God, are the sons of God. And Ver. 16, 17. The Spirit it self beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. And elsewhere the apostle useth it for an argument, why we should be careful not to resist, or quench the motions of God's blessed spirit; because by this mark we are sealed to eternal life. And quench not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. I should now have proceeded in the

Third place, To shew the blessed effects of the influence of the Holy Spirit dwelling and residing in us: But that, together with the extent of this gift of the Holy Ghost, as to persons and times, I shall refer to another opportunity.

S E R M O N CXLVII.

Of the ordinary Influence of the Holy Ghost, on
the Minds of Christians.

J O H N vii. 39.

But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.

*The Second
Sermon on
this Text.*

I N my former discourse from these words, I observed that the gift of the Spirit, or the Holy Ghost, comprehends under it *two* things.

First, Those extraordinary and miraculous gifts, which were bestowed upon the apostles and primitive christians, in order to the planting and propagating of the christian religion in the world; together with that extraordinary influence of God's Spirit upon the minds of believers, which accompanied the first preaching of the Gospel.

Secondly, The more ordinary and gentle influence of the Spirit of God, upon the minds of all those who believe and embrace the gospel.

The latter of these I proposed to speak to more particularly and fully, and that under these *four heads*:

First, To open the nature of this influence.

Secondly, To shew the necessity of it, to enable us to perform the condition of the Gospel-covenant.

Thirdly, To consider the blessed effects of it.

Fourthly, To consider the extent of it, as to persons and times.

The two *first* of these I have spoken to, and now proceed to what remains, *viz.*

Thirdly, to consider the blessed effects of this gift of the Holy Ghost. And they are many and great.

I shall enumerate them as briefly as I can, not intending to insist long upon them. And in general, all the good that is in us, and proceeds from us, all good thoughts and inclinations, all good purposes and resolutions, all good works and actions are in Scripture every where ascribed to the dictates and motions, to the influence and assistance of the Holy Spirit of God. It is *he that works in us, both to will and to do of his own mere goodness*. All our strength and sufficiency is from him. To his blessed inspirations and aids we owe all good inclinations, our beginning, and our progress, and our perseverance in virtue and goodness. And though the Spirit be said to be *given* to them that do already believe, that is, so as to dwell and reside, to take up his constant habitation and abode only in those who have already sincerely embraced the christian faith; yet this doth not exclude a preventing influence and operation of God's Holy Spirit upon the minds of those to whom the Gospel is offered, disposing them to embrace and entertain it, and by this means working faith in them. And in this sense it is, that *faith* in scripture is said to be *the gift of God*, because it is first wrought in them by the influence and operation of that blessed Spirit, which is promised to dwell and reside in them after they have believed, and sincerely embraced the christian religion.

More particularly these blessed fruits and effects are constantly in scripture attributed to the Holy Spirit of God.

1. Our Sanctification. We are said *to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and by the spirit to mortify the deeds of the flesh*. That great change which is wrought in man, which in Scripture is called by the several names of *regeneration*, and *a new birth*, of *the new creature*, and *the new man*, is constantly ascribed to the Spirit of God, as the author of it.

2. The conduct of our whole christian course, and all the actions of it, and our constancy and perseverance in it, are likewise ascribed to the same blessed Cause.

We

We are said to be led by the spirit, and to walk in the spirit; that is, to be guided and assisted in all that we do, by this blessed principle, which does as it were act and animate all good men; and we are said to be kept by the mighty power of God, that is, by the powerful operation of God's holy spirit, through faith unto salvation.

3. All particular graces and virtues are likewise said to be the fruit of the spirit. Gal. v. 22. *The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (or rather fidelity,) meekness, temperance.* And Ephes. v. 9. *The fruit of the spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.* And charity, which is the sum almost of all other graces and virtues, is said to be planted and wrought in us by the spirit, 1 Pet. i. 22. *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, thro' the spirit, unto charity, or unfeigned love of the brethren.*

4. By the same spirit we are said to be made partakers of that great and glorious privilege of adoption, and are advanced to that high honour and dignity of being called the sons of God, Rom. viii. 14. *As many as are led by the spirit of God, are the sons of God,* and consequently heirs of a blessed resurrection to eternal life. For so the apostle reasons, Ver. 16, 17. *The spirit it self beareth witness with our spirit, that is, is a testimony within us, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.* So that the holy spirit of God, which is conferr'd upon all sincere christians, and does reside in them, is a mark or seal of their being the children of God, and a pledge or earnest of the blessed inheritance of eternal life, as the scripture very plainly and frequently declares, 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. *Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, or set his signature and mark upon us; and what this is, he explains in the next words; and he hath given us the earnest or pledge of the spirit in our hearts.* Ephes. i. 13, 14. *In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise; which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.* And Chap. iv. 30. *And grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

5. By this spirit we have free access to God in prayer, in confidence that we shall have our petitions granted, Ephes. ii. 18. *For through him, that is, through Jesus Christ, we both have an access by one spirit unto the father.* By the same spirit likewise we are assisted in our prayers to God, and directed what to ask of him. So St. Paul tells us, Rom. viii. 26. *that we do not know what to pray for as we ought; but the spirit helpeth our infirmities, and intercedeth for us; that is, suggests to us such petitions and requests as are fit for us to put up to God.*

6. By the same spirit joy and peace in believing, and from the testimony of a good conscience, great consolation and good hope through grace, are frequently instill'd into us, and shed abroad in our hearts. Hence are those expressions so frequent in scripture, of the consolations of the spirit, of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which, as it is the natural fruit of righteousness, so it is likewise produced and increased in us, by the secret operation and influence of God's Holy spirit.

7. And lastly, By the same spirit christians are supported and borne up, cheered and comforted in all their troubles and afflictions, and that in a very extraordinary and supernatural manner, when they fall under great tribulations and sufferings for righteousness sake. And this influence and assistance of the divine spirit, was very visible and remarkable among the primitive christians, who were so terribly exposed to the most fierce and cruel persecutions; and may proportionably be expected in all cases of extraordinary suffering for the testimony of God's truth.

And tho' this influence and assistance, this conduct and guidance of the divine spirit, be commonly very gentle and secret, and do usually work upon us in so imperceptible a manner, that it is very hard, if not impossible, particularly to distinguish between the motions of God's spirit, and those of our own minds, between the immediate suggestions of the Holy Ghost, and the dictates of our own reason; yet we are in general sufficiently assured of it, partly from the effects themselves, but principally from the express promise and declarations of scripture, that christians are acted by a supernatural principle, and secretly assisted by the influence of a spirit above our own: And therefore we have reason, as the scripture constantly does, to ascribe all the good that is in us, or that is done by us, to this gracious assistance and powerful influence of the Holy Spirit of God upon our minds, and thankfully to acknowledge that in us, that is, in our flesh, in our carnal

nal minds consider'd as destitute of the spirit of God, *there dwells nothing that is good*; and that *by the grace of God we are what we are*, and are enabled to do all the good we do, *thro' Christ strengthening of us by his spirit in the inner man*. I proceed to the

Fourth and last thing I propos'd to consider, *viz.* The extent of this gift of the Holy Spirit of God, as to persons and times. And in short, this gift is bestowed upon every particular christian, every sincere believer; for *we receive the promise of the spirit by faith*: And, *If any man*, says the apostle, *Rom. viii. 9. have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his*; that is, he does not belong to him, he is no true christian. And *1. Cor. iii. 16. Know ye not*, says the same apostle, speaking of all christians in general, *know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

And that this gift extends to all persons, in all times and ages of the church, to all that sincerely embrace the christian profession, and are admitted into it by baptism, is plain from that discourse of *St. Peter*, which I had occasion to mention before, *Acts ii. 38. Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*. And that this was not a favour and privilege peculiar to the first ages of christianity but common to all succeeding times, is evident from what follows, *ver. 39. But the promise*, that is, the great promise of the Holy Ghost, *is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call*. That is, this promise of the spirit extends to all those who shall hereafter embrace the christian profession.

And in this sense, our Saviour makes good that promise which he made to the apostles, *to be with them always in the work of making disciples, and baptizing them, to the end of the world*; that is, he would accompany the labours of the pastors and teachers of his church in all ages, with such a presence and influence of his spirit upon those that were *taught and baptized*, as should be suitable to the occasions and necessities of the church, both the pastors and the members of it, *unto the end of the world*. In a word, this gift of God's Holy Spirit is bestowed upon all those who by baptism are admitted into Christ's religion, and if it be cherish'd and complied with, and the blessed motions of it be not resisted and quenched by us, it will abide and continue with us, and produce those blessed fruits and effects which I have before mentioned.

Having thus explain'd the several particulars contain'd in the text, all that now remains, is to make some useful inferences from the whole; and they shall be these following, and I shall be very brief in them.

I. What an encouragement is here to our duty, that we have such a mighty aid and assistance promised and afforded to us in the gospel? So that the apostle doth with great reason exhort, *2 Cor. vii. 1. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*. And we are utterly inexcusable, if we do not make use of that grace which is promised, and ready to be afforded to us to this end; it is our own fault if *sin still have dominion over us, and reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts of it*.

II. What great cause have we thankfully to acknowledge the wonderful goodness of God to us, in bestowing such an invaluable gift upon us, as this of the Holy Spirit, by whose grace and assistance alone we are made partakers of all the other blessings and benefits of the gospel? Had we been still left without strength, that great salvation which Christ hath purchased for us, and which the Gospel offers, would have signified nothing to us, for want of power to have performed the Conditions which the gospel requires of all that hope for eternal life and salvation.

III. Let us always be ready to comply with the motions and suggestions of the blessed spirit, and sincerely make use of those aids and assistances which he is always ready to afford to us; and let us take great heed, that we do not by any disobedience of ours to his blessed motions, or by any wilful presumptuous sins, *resist and quench, and grieve this Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption*.

If the spirit of God vouchsafe to dwell in us, and to make his abode in our sinful souls and bodies; let us do nothing that is unworthy of so divine and heavenly a guest; let his presence with us fill our hearts with a continual awe and

reverence of him, and engage us effectually to cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; let nothing be acted by us, or proceed from us, which may defile this temple of the Holy Ghost. *Ye are the temple of the living God*, says St. Paul, 2 Cor. vi. 16. And in the first of the Corinthians, iii. 16, 17. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.* More particularly the Apostle useth it as an argument to flee from fornication, because our bodies also are the temples of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. vi. 18, 19. *Flee fornication: for every sin that a man doth, that is other sins which men commit, are without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body; that is, pollutes and defiles it.* And then it follows, *What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

IV. Let us earnestly beg of God his Holy Spirit, and continually depend upon him for his grace and assistance, in an humble sense of our own impotency and weakness, of the frailty and treachery of our own spirits, of the fickleness and inconstancy of our best purposes and resolutions, always remembering that saying of our Saviour's, John xv. 5. *Without me ye can do nothing.* And that of St. Paul, Ephes. ii. 8. *For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of your selves: it is the gift of God.* And that of St. Peter, 1 Pet. i. 5. speaking in general of all true Christians, *Who, says he, are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. This power of God is the Spirit, which they that believe receive, and by the blessed guidance and influence whereof they are kept unto salvation.*

V. This shews us what an advantage we have by the Christian religion; which makes us partakers of the Holy Ghost, whereby is afforded to us all necessary direction and assistance, and comfort in our Christian course. Our Saviour tells his disciples, that the presence and influence of this Comforter and Advocate, whom he would send to abide with them for ever, would be more to them, than even his own personal presence among them, which surely we should look upon as an unspeakable privilege and happiness; and yet the inward presence of the divine spirit is more for our security and comfort, than the best teacher and example; because it is inward, and conveys a real strength to us; and it is universal, diffusing itself at once into the hearts and minds of all good men, and is always present to them, which Christ's personal and visible presence was not, nor could be; so that to all purposes of direction and assistance, of security and comfort, we are in a better condition under the continual influence and conduct of God's Holy Spirit, than they who had the advantage and happiness of conversing personally with our Saviour here upon earth. And therefore he tells his disciples, that it was really for their benefit and advantage, that he should leave the world, to make way for the coming of this Comforter and Advocate, John xvi. 7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* So that they were gainers by their loss, and his departure from them upon these terms was really to their advantage.

VI. This shews the great fault of the contempt and neglect of the sacrament of baptism, which was instituted by our Saviour as the solemn rite and ceremony of admitting persons into the Christian religion, and the means of making us partakers of this gift of the Spirit, and of all the blessed fruits and effects of it; so that this sacrament cannot be neglected or slighted, without great affront to the Christian religion, and contempt of one of the greatest blessings promised in the gospel. They that were admitted to the solemn profession of Christianity by baptism, were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; and this not only in the Apostles times, but in all after-ages; for this promise of the Holy Ghost was to them and their children, and to all that were afar off, even to as many as the Lord their God should call; that is, to all that should embrace the Christian religion, and make a solemn profession of it in baptism, in all succeeding ages to the end of the world.

VII. What hath been discoursed upon this argument, discovers the vanity of many mens pretensions to the Spirit. Some pretend to infallibility, all pretence whereto is vain, without miracles to justify and make good this pretence; and yet

upon this presumption of infallibility, without any proof of it, but only that it is convenient for them to have it, which will as well prove all others to be infallible, because it is every whit as convenient for them: I say, upon this presumption and pretence, they assume to themselves to dictate to all the world, what they shall believe, and to censure and condemn all those who will not submit to their dictates, as miserably mistaken, and out of the way of salvation; whereas the infallibility of the Apostles was a supernatural gift, not evident of itself, but evidenced to the world by the miracles which were wrought, to confirm the truth of their testimony and doctrine; and without this evidence of infallibility, no man's, no church's pretences to it ought to be regarded, but ought to be looked upon as fanatical enthusiasm: besides the prodigious uncharitableness of this Spirit, is as directly contrary as can be to the first and chief *fruit of the Spirit* mentioned by the Apostle, which is *love or charity*.

Others pretend to be guided by the Spirit in all their actions, and to be governed in an extraordinary manner by particular impulses and impressions from the Spirit of God; which they likewise pretend they can certainly discern from the motions of their own minds and imaginations. But as they can give no reason for this, so we have seen many times in experience, that men have been led into unlawful and wicked practices, and have done weak and unreasonable and ridiculous things, and then have blasphemously charged them upon the Spirit of God; a presumption of a high nature, and which hath some resemblance to the sin against the Holy Ghost, and seems to be of near affinity with it. For as the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost consisted in resisting the evidence of our Saviour's miracles, and perversely and maliciously imputing the operations of the Spirit of God to the power and efficacy of the Devil; so on the other hand, to pretend to the Spirit of God and his motions for the works of the Devil, and any thing that is wicked; and to ascribe these things, which are more likely to proceed from the instigation of that evil Spirit, to the impulse of the Holy Spirit of God, is a high blasphemy of the Holy Ghost.

Others pretend, that the Spirit doth immediately dictate to them their prayers, which many times are very confused and unbeseeming, and too plainly the issue of a heated imagination; whereas *God is not the God of confusion, but of order*. And what is meerly the effect of an acquired habit, or natural fluency and facility of expression and warm affections, they confidently ascribe to the Spirit of God; whereas the Spirit of God is more frequently and certainly in *the still voice*, than in *the high wind and fire*, the boisterous passions, and fiery zeal of men. And certainly he that takes care to put up wise and decent petitions to God, and considers carefully what to beg of him, and asks it in a becoming manner, with *faith* and true *fervency* of affection, though in a form, hath much more reason to conclude that he prays *in and by the Spirit of God*, than he that hath the greatest freedom of extempore effusions.

And after all, there is a much better and clearer demonstration, that a man hath the Spirit of God, than any of these pretences, and that is from the undoubted *fruits of the Spirit*, in the graces and virtues of a good life, which are visible and manifest in the temper and conversation of a good man; and without these, all pretences to the Spirit of God, are but fancy and vain delusions; such men *deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them*.

VIII. And lastly, From hence it appears how happy it is for us, that we are not left in our own hands, and to our own weakness and impotency, and *to work out our own salvation*, but that we are under the continual conduct, and powerful protection of such a guardian, and that the Holy Spirit is always ready to be afforded to us, to all the purposes of guidance and assistance, of comfort and support, of sanctification and obedience, of patient continuance and perseverance in well-doing. *Let us therefore*, as the Apostle exhorts, *work out our salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do*. We are not left to our selves to carry on this great work, for then it would certainly miscarry; but *God works in us*, both *the will* and inclination to that which is good, and gives us *the power to do it*: he does not force our wills, but incline them by the gentle suggestions and motions of his blessed spirit; with which, if we comply, we are happy; if we resist them, and rebel against them, *we receive the grace of God in vain, and our ruin and destruction is of our selves*. But

But can we then do nothing? No; not without the preventing and assisting grace of God; but that being afforded to us, we may comply with the motions of God's blessed Spirit; we may co-operate and concur with his assistance. God assists; but we do; he sanctifies and renews us by the Holy Ghost, and yet we purify and cleanse our selves.

But is not this injurious to the grace of God, if we do any thing all, and the grace of God not do all in us and for us? I answer,

1. It is a great grace of God, to help our weakness; and to relieve our impotency, and to strengthen and enable us to do what we cannot do of our selves. We owe our salvation to the grace of God, to the influence and assistance of his Holy Spirit; if so be that without it we should still remain *dead in trespasses and sins*, and should never be able to emerge and recover out of that corrupt and miserable state.

2. Grace does not destroy nature, nor divine assistance take away our liberty, but frees us from our bondage; and, as *David* expresseth it, *enlargeth our hearts to run the ways of God's commandments*; for if God do all, and we nothing, all exhortations and persuasions would be in vain.

But then it seems that we may receive the grace of God in vain, and resist the Holy Ghost; and our complying with it, or not resisting of it, is our own Act; which is to make men their own Saviour, and to give the casting and determining vote to human liberty. I answer,

1. The scripture expressly says, that men may receive the grace of God in vain, and reject the counsel of God against themselves; and that if we rebel against, and disobey the motions of God's Spirit, he will depart from us, and we forfeit his assistance.

2. All this is, *ἀργός λόγος*, *meer cavil*; as will appear to any one, by this plain instance. A rebel is convicted, and liable to the sentence and condemnation of the law; he sues for a pardon, and obtains and accepts it: will any man now say, that because he asks and accepts it from the king, and the king does not take his hand and open it, and violently thrust his pardon into it, that this man saves himself, and takes away the glory of the king's grace and mercy, and that he owes his life to himself, and not to the king's bounty and goodness? A man would be thought very senseless, that should so ascribe this man's deliverance from death to any act of his own, as not to think it wholly owing to the king's grace and favour. I think the case is the very same, concerning mens complying with that grace which God affords them for their *repentance unto life*. I would fain know of these subtle objectors, whether *Moses*, when he says, *Deut. xxx. 19. I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore chuse life*; does not, in so saying, plainly suppose, that men may *chuse life* or *refuse it*? And if so, whether he intended to make men their own Saviour?

But this objection is press'd yet a little farther; that if this be so, then *Judas* had as much cause to thank God as *Peter* had. And who ever denied, or can deny, that a rebel who refuseth a pardon offer'd to him by his prince, hath the same real obligation of gratitude to his prince, with him that accepts it? The prince offers the same favour to both, and the obligation is equal; and tho' he that accepts it doth not save himself, yet he that refuseth it destroys himself. And at the Judgment of the great day, all impenitent sinners under the Gospel, shall be forc'd to acknowledge the grace of God to them, in affording the opportunity of Salvation, and shall only blame and condemn themselves for neglecting that happy opportunity. But if an irresistible degree of grace be necessary to every man's Salvation, it is plain, that impenitent sinners never had the opportunity of Salvation, and consequently cannot condemn themselves for the neglect of it.

I have been the longer upon this, that I might root out of the minds of men an inveterate false persuasion, concerning the manner of the operation of God's grace in the conversion of sinners. And thus much may suffice to have been spoken concerning the operation of God's Spirit upon men, in order to their conversion and making of them good: But after men are converted, and do sincerely *repent and believe the gospel*, they have the Spirit of God in another manner; he *dwells and resides in believers*, as a constant and settled principle of holiness and obedience, as I have already shewn.

S E R M O N CXLVIII.

The fruits of the Spirit, the same with moral virtues.

E P H E S. v. 9.

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.

* Preach'd
on Whit-
sunday,
1690.
† See
Sermon
CXLIII.

I Have formerly, upon occasion of this festival solemnity, * discours'd on divers sorts of arguments relating to the Holy Spirit of God: as concerning the † miraculous powers and gifts of the Holy Ghost, confer'd upon the Apostles in a visible manner, when they were assembled together upon this day of *Pentecost*, to qualify and enable them for the more speedy and effectual planting and propagating of the christian religion in the world; which is the argument more peculiarly proper to this day.

|| See Serm.
CXLVI.
&
CXLVII.

I have likewise || discours'd to you concerning the sanctifying power and virtue of the Holy Spirit of God, which is common to all christians, and to all ages of the christian church: as also concerning the blessed fruit and effect of God's Holy Spirit, conferred upon christians in baptism, and which does continually dwell and reside in all those who do sincerely perform, and make good their baptismal Vow, to assist and enable them to all the purposes of holiness and obedience, and to work and increase in us all those graces and virtues which are here in the text, said to be the fruit of the Holy Spirit of God. *For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.* The connexion of which words with the Apostle's foregoing discourse, is briefly this. At the 17th verse of the former chapter, the Apostle gives a solemn charge to the christians at *Ephesus*, who were newly converted from heathenism to christianity, to be careful that their conversation be answerable to that holy religion which they now made profession of, and that as they had quitted the religion and rites of paganism, so likewise that they would abandon the vices and evil practices of it; that the world might see that they had made as great a change in their minds and manners, as in their religion. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darken'd, being alienated from the life of God, thro' the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who having lost the sense of good and evil, have given themselves over to all filthiness and brutish lusts.* And then at the 20th verse he tells them, that the christian religion requires another sort of conversation: *But ye have not so learned Christ: If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; or, the holiness of truth.*

And then he cautions them against several sorts of vices which they had formerly lived in, and recommends the contrary virtues to their practice; and as an argument thereto, he puts them again in mind of the change which they had made at the 8th verse of this chapter; *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.* The condition they were in, whilst they were heathens, he calls *darkness*; by which metaphor he represents that dismal state of ignorance and wickedness in which they formerly were; *but now are ye light in the Lord*: Being admitted into the christian religion by baptism, they were enlighten'd by the Spirit of God. For so the Apostle to the *Hebrews* describes baptism by *illumination*, and being made partakers of the Holy Ghost, Heb. vi. 4. *They that were once enlighten'd, and have tasted of the heavenly gift; which he explains in the*

next

next words, by being made partakers of the Holy Ghost, because that is confer'd in baptism.

But now are ye light in the Lord, walk therefore as children of the light; that is, do nothing unbecoming that state, into which by the solemn profession of Christianity in baptism ye are enter'd; or as it follows a little after the text, *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; walk as children of the light*, as becomes those who are enlighten'd and sanctified by the Holy Spirit of God, whereof ye were made partakers in baptism: for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.

For the fruit of the Spirit. Some copies have it, *ὁ γὰρ καρπὸς τῆς φωτός*, for the fruit of light, that is, of the illumination of the Holy Ghost, which Christians are made partakers of in baptism, is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, which will make no difference in the sense.

I shall briefly explain the importance of these three words, *goodness*, and *righteousness* and *truth*: and then proceed to make some observations from the text.

I. *Goodness*. And what that is, the Apostle takes it for granted that every body knows; he does not go about to define or explain it, but appeals to every man's mind and conscience, to tell him what it is. It is not any thing that is disputed and controverted among men, which some call good, and others evil; but that which mankind is agreed in, and which is universally approv'd by the light of nature, by Heathens, as well as Christians; it is that which is substantially good, and that which is unquestionably so. It is not a zeal for indifferent things, about the ritual and ceremonial part of religion, the external circumstances of it, much nicety and scrupulousness about things of no moment and consideration, such as was the Pharisees tything of mint, anise, and cummin; disputes about meats and drinks, and the observation of days, and the like; but a pursuit of the weightier things of the law, a care of the great duties of religion, and those things wherein the kingdom of God consists; the practice of the great virtues of conversation, which are apt to recommend us to the general approbation of men, to gain their good will, and to take off exasperations, and to calm and sweeten the spirits and tempers of men towards us. And they must likewise be things unquestionably good, and against which there is no exception, such as will justify and bear themselves out in the general opinion of mankind.

I know very well that *goodness*, in the strict notion of it, does signify a ready inclination of mind to benefit and help others all that we can, as we have opportunity. And this is the particular virtue of *alms-giving*, or as we commonly call it, *charity*; which is so often recommended to us under the notion of *doing good*. Gal. vi. 10. *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men*. And 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*.

But there is a larger notion of *goodness* more frequently used in the New Testament, which comprehends and takes in all those virtues of conversation, which are universally and by the light of nature owned to be such, and the practice whereof is apt to recommend us to the love and esteem of all men; as on the contrary, the neglect of them is apt to bring religion under a great scandal and censure: such are obedience to our superiors and governors, and a conscientious care to discharge all those duties which the several relations wherein we stand to others, do call for from us.

Obedience to governors is recommended to us under the notion of *goodness*, or *well-doing*. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 15. *Submit your selves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well*. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. So likewise praying for those that are in authority, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3. *I exhort therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty*. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

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In like manner, a conscientious discharge of the duties which other relations require is recommended to us under the notion of *goodness*, and that which is a special grace and ornament to religion, 1 Tim. v. 4. *Let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents, for that is good and acceptable before God.* And Tit. ii. 9, 10. the Apostle exhorts servants to be obedient to their masters; that by this instance of goodness, as well as others, they may bring credit and reputation to religion; *Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things: not answering again; not purloining; but shewing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

More particularly, the several virtues of conversation are frequently instanced in, as branches of *goodness*, as unity, peaceableness, courtesy, compassion, and goodwill towards all men. The practice of these things the Apostle calls *the following of that which is good*, Rom. xii. 9, 10, &c. *Let love be without dissimulation: Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one towards another. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto wrath. Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good.* So likewise the Apostle, 1 Thes. v. 15. instanceth in abstaining from revenge, as an eminent piece of *goodness*. *See that none render evil for evil unto any man: but ever follow that which is good, both among your selves and to all men.* And St. Peter also gives much the same instances of *goodness* that St. Paul hath done, 1 Pet. iii. 8, 9, &c. *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren: be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrarywise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good: That is, if ye practice goodness in the instances I have mentioned.*

You see then what *goodness* is, by the instances which the Scripture gives of it; obedience to our superiors and governors, and a conscientious care of the duties of our several relations, sincere love and charity, compassion, humility, peace and unity, abstaining from wrath and revenge, and rendering good for evil; these are unquestionable instances of *goodness*, and pass for current among all mankind, are on all hands agreed to be good, and have an universal approbation among all parties and professions, how wide soever their differences may be in other matters.

These are the things which are in Scripture more peculiarly called *good*, because they are so in themselves and in their own nature; and not meerly because they are commanded, as the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion were, which are therefore called by God himself, in the prophet, *Statutes that were not good*, Ezek. xx. 25. *Wherefore I gave them statutes that were not good; that is, I gave them laws concerning several things, which had no intrinsecal goodness in them.* But moral duties, because of the essential and eternal goodness of them, are eminently called *good*; as in that known passage of the prophet, Micah. vi. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

The other two fruits of the Spirit which are added in the text, *Righteousness* and *Truth*, which respect likewise our conversation with men, more especially in the way of commerce, are rather parts or branches of *goodness*, than really distinct from it; but they are two considerable virtues, and therefore the Apostle thought fit to instance particularly in them, after he had mentioned *goodness*, which is indeed the general name that comprehends all virtues in it.

The fruit of the Spirit is righteousness, which signifies justice in our dealings and actions with others; and *truth*, which is justice in our words; for he that speaks as he thinks, and performs and makes good what he promiseth, is said to be just to his word. And all these, *goodness*, and *righteousness*, and *truth*, and whatever

particular virtues are comprehended under them, tho' they be truly and properly *moral virtues*, yet are said to be *fruits of the Spirit*.

From the words thus explain'd, I shall make these *four* observations, which I shall speak as briefly to as I can.

First, That *the fruits of the Spirit* are plain and sensible effects, appearing in the disposition and lives of men.

Secondly, That these *fruits of the Spirit*, here mentioned, are of an eternal and immutable nature, and of perpetual and indispensable obligation.

Thirdly, That *moral virtues* are *the graces and fruits of the Spirit*.

Fourthly, That therefore they are by no means to be slighted, as low and mean attainments in religion; but are to be looked upon and esteemed as a main and substantial part of christianity.

First, That *the fruits of the Spirit* are real and sensible effects, appearing in the dispositions and lives of men. The apostle here speaks of what is visible in the lives and conversations of men; for he exhorts christians to *walk as children of the light*; now *walking* is a metaphor, which signifies the outward conversation and actions of men. *Walk as children of the light*. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness, and truth; that is, if a man be endued with the Spirit, it will discover it self by these visible fruits and effects. What the apostle says of *the works of the flesh*, Galat. v. 19. *The works of the flesh are manifest*, plainly to be seen in the lives and conversations of men, is equally true of *the fruits of the Spirit*, that *they also are visible and manifest*; so that by these men may make a judgment of their condition, whether they be true christians, and *the Spirit of God dwell in them*, or not, viz. by the temper and disposition of our minds, manifestly appearing in our lives and actions, by the practice of those real virtues which are the proper and genuine *fruits of the Holy Spirit of God*. For religion is not an invisible thing, consisting in meer belief, in height of speculation, and niceties of opinion, or in abstruseness of mystery. The scripture does not place it in things remote from the sight and observation of men; but in real and visible effects, such as may be plainly discerned, and even felt in the conversation of men; not in abstracted notions, but in substantial virtues; and in a sensible power and efficacy upon the lives of men, in all the instances of piety and virtue, of holy and excellent actions. This our Saviour requires of his disciples, that the virtue and holiness of their lives should be so visible and conspicuous, that all men may behold it, and give testimony to it, and glorify God upon that account; Mat. v. 16. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven*. Not that men should make any ostentation of religion, as the pharisees did of their devotion and alms, which our Saviour censures very severely: but there is a great difference between an affected and vain-glorious shew of piety and virtue, and the real and substantial effects of them in a good life, which as they cannot, so they ought not to be hid; nay, on the contrary, men ought, as St. James exhorts, James iii. 13. *to shew out of a good conversation their works with meekness of wisdom*, that is, in a wise manner, not with pride and ostentation, but with meekness and humility, the great ornament of all christian graces and virtues. I proceed to the

Second observation, namely, that these *fruits of the Spirit*, here mentioned, *goodness, and righteousness, and truth*, are of an eternal and immutable nature, and of perpetual and indispensable obligation. The notions of good and evil, of just and unjust, of truth and fidelity, and of falsehood and perfidiousness in our words and actions, I say these notions are born with us, and imprinted in our natures, are so fix'd and determin'd in the very frame of our minds and understandings, that as they need not be explain'd, so they can never be chang'd and altered. The difference of good and evil is naturally known, and the notions of *righteousness, and goodness, and truth*, are fixed antecedently to any divine revelation, which supposeth the nature of them to be known, and therefore doth not go about to define and explain them to us; and supposeth likewise the obligation of them, being branches of the law of nature, and essential parts of that religion which is *born with us, and written upon our hearts*, and makes us a law to our selves. And therefore the christian religion doth only declare these duties more plainly, and press them more earnestly upon us, and enforce the obligation of them

by more powerful arguments and considerations, grounded upon clearer discoveries of the grace and mercy of God to mankind, and of the rewards and punishments of another world: but these duties are in their nature still the same, and the christian religion is so far from releasing us from the obligation of them, that it hath very much heighten'd it, and bound them the faster upon us. I pass on to the

Third Observation from these words, namely, that *moral virtues are the graces and fruits of the spirit*. For the three particulars here mentioned by the apostle are no other, but the chief heads and instances of moral duties, *goodness, and righteousness, and truth*. What are these but moral virtues? and yet it is certain, that they are also christian graces, because they are here expressly said to be *the fruits of the spirit*.

And they are called *moral virtues*, because they are such duties as are not enjoined by any positive law, (which is not obligatory from the nature and reason of the thing commanded, but meerly from the command;) but are of natural and eternal obligation, and such, as we had been bound to the observance of them, from the immutable goodness and reason of them, tho' God had never made any external revelation of his will concerning them. Tho' it cannot be denied, but that by the means of external revelation, we have a more clear and certain knowledge of them and more powerful motives to the practice of them. So that *grace* and *virtue* are but two names that signify the same thing. *Virtue* signifies the absolute nature and goodness of these things: *grace* denotes the cause and principle by which these *virtues* are wrought and produced, and are preserved and increased in us, namely, by the free gift of God's Holy Spirit to us; for which reason, these graces and virtues of *goodness, and righteousness, and truth*, which are here mentioned in the text, are said to be *the fruits of the spirit*. I come now to the

Fourth and *last* observation from the text, namely, that since these very things which are called *moral virtues*, are in their nature the very same with *the graces and fruits of the spirit*, therefore they are by no means to be slighted, as low and mean attainments in religion, but to be looked upon and esteemed as a main and substantial part of christianity. They are called *the fruits of the spirit*; that is, the natural and genuine effect of that divine power and influence upon the hearts and lives of men, which accompanies the christian religion; or the happy effects of the christian religion wrought in men, by the immediate operation and assistance of the Holy Spirit of God, which is conferred upon all christians in their baptism, and does continually dwell and reside in them, if by wilful sins they do not grieve him, and drive him away, and provoke him to withdraw himself from them.

I do not say that these virtues are all religion, and all that is necessary to make a man a compleat christian, and good man. For there must be knowledge to direct us in our duty; there must be faith or a hearty assent to the revelation of the gospel, (especially concerning the forgiveness of our sins, and of our justification and acceptance with God, for the sake of the meritorious sufferings of our blessed Saviour) to be the root and principle of all religious actions; there must be piety and devotion towards God, and the constant practice and exercise of religious duties in publick and private, such as prayer, hearing and reading the word of God, frequent and reverent receiving of the holy sacrament, which are the best and most effectual means in the world to make men good, because they are appointed by God, and attended with his blessing to that end; I say, there must be all these, because they are the principles and means of religion, which are always supposed as necessary to that which is the end. Now the great end of religion, that which christianity mainly designs to work and perfect in us, are those graces and virtues which are called *the fruits of the spirit*; such as those mentioned in the text, *goodness, and righteousness, and truth*.

And this will be evident to any one that will attentively consider what the scripture says of them; and more especially how our Saviour and his apostles do every where recommend them to our consideration and practice, *Micah vi. 8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* It is to these qualities and dispositions of *goodness and righteousness*, and the like virtues, that our

our Saviour promises blessedness. These St. Peter calls a *Divine* or *God-like nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4, 5. speaking of the knowledge of the Gospel. *Whereby, says he, are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature*; and thereupon he exhorts that Christians should give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, by adding to the faith of the Gospel, the several graces and virtues of a good life; these being that *Divine Nature* which the Gospel designs to make us partakers of.

To speak a little more particularly of the three virtues here mentioned, *goodness, righteousness, and truth*. These are every where frequently commended and enjoined in the New Testament. *Goodness*, whether we consider it as it imports charity in general, and our love of one another, our Saviour makes it the great badge and mark of a Christian. *Hereby, says he, shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another*. St. Paul calls it *the fulfilling of the law, and the end of the commandment*, τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας, *the great end and design of the Gospel, is charity*. St. John riseth yet higher, and speaks of it as the very nature and essence of God himself, and that by which we are as it were united to him. *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him*. Or whether we consider *goodness*, under the notion of compassion and beneficence, a readiness to pity and relieve, and benefit others according to our ability and opportunities. This the Scripture celebrates as a thing highly acceptable to God. Heb. xiii. 16. *But to do good; and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*. And St. James instanceth in it as one of the most signal testimonies of true piety, James i. 27. *Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*. And chap. iii. 17. he makes it a mark and character of the divine and heavenly wisdom; *The wisdom which is from above, is full of mercy and good works*.

And then for *righteousness*, of which *truth* and *fidelity* in our intercourse with men is a considerable part, St. Paul instanceth in it, in the first place, as a principal thing wherein *the kingdom of God doth consist*, Rom. xiv. 17. *The kingdom of God doth not consist in meats and drinks*, that is, the power and efficacy of the Christian religion, or the Gospel, (which is frequently in the New Testament called *The kingdom of God*) doth not consist in zeal about indifferent things: but in the substantial virtues of a good life, *in righteousness and peace*.

You see by all this, at what a rate the Scripture magnifies these virtues, as the great things of religion, the end of the Gospel, and that wherein our Christianity does mainly consist. The consideration whereof would make a man stand amazed, to think how these virtues should ever fall into so much contempt among those who call themselves Christians, and do every day read the Bible; and come to be accounted but low and pitiful things, in comparison of I know not what fancies and conceits, wherein some are pleased to place religion. For what can the best religion that ever was in the world (which Christianity certainly is) be better placed in, than in these and the like virtues; all which are so excellent in their nature and use and have so direct a tendency both to the happiness of particular persons singly consider'd, and of human society, and several of them, especially those instanced in, in the text, *goodness, and righteousness, and truth*, are the very nature and perfection of God himself?

And what more worthy to be *the fruits of the Holy Spirit of God*, and the effects of a divine power and influence working upon the minds of men, than such qualities and dispositions as render us so like to God, and do so nearly resemble the highest excellencies and perfections of the divine nature? And therefore our Saviour useth this as an argument to persuade us to be good, and merciful, and patient; because these qualities are so near a resemblance and imitation of the divine perfection, the nearest that creatures are capable of. Mat. v. 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*.

And thus I have dispatch'd the four observations from the text; that *the fruits of the Spirit* are plain and sensible effects, appearing in the dispositions and lives of men: that they are of an eternal and immutable nature, and of perpetual and indispensable obligation; and though they be *moral virtues*, yet they are likewise *the fruits of the Spirit*; and are by no means to be slighted and undervalued, as low and mean attainments in religion.

All that now remains, is to make some inferences from what has been discours'd on this text.

And if this discourse be true, then the want of these virtues mention'd in the text, and the reigning of the contrary vices in us, is a clear and undeniable evidence, notwithstanding all our fair professions and pretences, that we are not true Christians. For if we do not bring forth *the fruits of the Spirit*, we have not the Spirit of Christ; and then St. Paul hath determin'd our case, that *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. If these Christian graces and virtues mention'd in the text, *goodness, and righteousness, and truth*, do not shine forth in our lives and conversations, it is plain, according to the Apostle's reasoning in this and other texts, that we are not *children of the light*, because we do not *walk as children of the light*, as those that are enlighten'd by the Spirit of God; for *the fruit of the Spirit*, or *the fruit of light*, as some copies have it, *is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth*. And if these *fruits* be not found in us, 'tis a plain evidence that we do not *walk in the Spirit*, that we are not *led and guided by the Spirit of God*; for *the fruits of the Spirit*, as well as *the works of the flesh*, are manifest, sufficiently plain and visible in the conversations of men; and according as we *fulfil the lusts of the one*, or *bring forth the fruits of the other*, we may certainly judge whether we have the Spirit of Christ or not, that is, whether we be true Christians, or do only usurp a name, and take a title to our selves, which does not of right belong to us. We need not to trouble and puzzle our selves with a great many doubtful and obscure marks, to find out by them what our state and condition is, and whether we be the children of God or not; if we have a mind to know it, we may soon bring the matter to an issue, by looking into our own hearts and lives, whether *the fruits of the Spirit* be there, *in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth*, and in all those virtues which are elsewhere mention'd as *fruits of the Spirit*. These are plain and sensible things, and if these virtues be in us, they cannot be hid from our selves or others, but will shine forth in our lives and conversations, in all our words and actions. *Goodness* is soon seen, it hath a native beauty and brightness in it, which draws the eyes of men towards it; and it discovers it self by its effects, which are perceiv'd and felt in those upon whom it is exercised. *Righteousness*, and *truth*, are likewise very sensible to ourselves and others; and so are the contrary dispositions and practices. No man does an unjust thing, but his conscience tells him he does so; no man speaks contrary to truth, or breaks his word and promise, but he is guilty to himself of so doing. And thus I might instance in all other virtues and vices. If we will but look into our selves, and observe our own actions, we may easily discern, whether we be malicious and envious, cruel and hard-hearted, censorious and uncharitable; or good, and kind, and merciful, and ready to forgive; whether we make conscience of our word or not; or whether we do to others, as we would have them do to us. Nothing is more easy to be known than it is, which of these qualities does possess and rule our hearts, and govern and bear sway in our lives. And if we can know this, we know whether we have the *fruits of the Spirit* or not; for *the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth*. And by these *fruits of the Spirit*, or the want of them, (which are both very discernable) we may know what our state and condition is, whether we have the Spirit of God, and be true and sincere Christians. A great many men tire themselves in an endless enquiry, concerning the good estate of their Souls towards God; whether they be the children of God, and whether they have the Spirit of God or not, and are trying themselves all their lives, by obscure and uncertain marks, which will never bring the matter to any clear issue, but leave them still in the dark and in doubt, concerning their own sincerity, and the integrity of their hearts towards God; and how can it be otherwise, since they have been so often told by unskilful men, that they cannot know their own hearts, and consequently can never be assured of their own integrity and sincerity? This, I must confess, is but an ill sign of sincerity, when we find it so hard a matter to discern it in our selves. Job found it clearly in himself, and was very confidently assured of it, Job xxvii. 5, 6. *Till I die, says he, I will not remove my integrity from me: my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go*. But if a man cannot know his own heart, and whether he have integrity or not; how shall he know either when he

parts with it, or when he holds it fast? the Apostle in the text gives us a sure mark whereby we may know when we have the Spirit of God, by the sensible *fruits* and effects of it.

I will conclude all with the Apostle's exhortation, *Phil. iv. 8: Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* Think of them and regard them as principal parts of your duty, and particular instances of that universal goodness which christianity teacheth and requires, as the proper and genuine effects of that *grace of God which hath appeared to all men, and brings salvation*, that is, of the gospel. And if the doctrine of the gospel do not produce these blessed fruits and effects in the hearts and lives of those who profess the christian religion; then, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* reasons, *how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which was at first spoken by the Lord, and afterwards confirmed by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

S E R M O N CXLIX.

The necessity of supernatural grace, in order to
a christian life.

J O H N xv. 5.

—For without me ye can do nothing.

IN the beginning of this chapter, our Saviour compares his mystical body, that is, his church, to a vine, which his father, whom he compares to a husbandman, hath planted. *I am the true vine, and my father is the husbandman.* To represent to us the union that is betwixt Christ and all true christians, and the influence of grace and spiritual life, which all that are united to him do derive and receive from him, he sets it forth to us by the resemblance of a vine and branches. As there is a natural vital union between the vine and the branches, so there is a spiritual vital union between Christ and true christians; and this union is the cause of our fruitfulness in the works of obedience and a good life. There are some indeed that seem to be grafted into Christ by an outward profession of christianity, who yet derive no influence from him, so as to bring forth fruit, because they are not vitally united to him; these the husbandman will lop off, and take away, as unprofitable and dead branches, *Ver. 2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; that is, they who only make an outward profession of faith in Christ, but do not bring forth the fruits of obedience and a good life, shall finally be separated from him; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* And because all our fruitfulness depends upon our union with Christ, as the fruitfulness of the branches depends upon their union with the vine, therefore he bids us be careful, that this union be preserved and continued, *Ver. 4. Abide in me, and I in you.* We are planted into Christ by faith, and the belief of his doctrine; and we abide in him by a firm purpose and resolution of obedience. So they are said to abide and continue in Christ's word, who obey and practise his Doctrine, *John viii. 31. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.* So St. James explains it, *James i. 25. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, that is, the christian doctrine, and continueth therein; how is that? he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.* And *1 John iii. 6. Whosoever abided in him, sinneth not.*

Abide in me, and I in you. Christ is said to *abide in us*, by the continual aids and influences of his grace and Holy Spirit; and if *we abide in him*, by the resolution of obedience, his grace and assistance will be continually derived to us, to bring this good resolution to effect, and to enable us to bring forth fruit. *For as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me, ye can do nothing, κωδὶς ἐμῷ, out of me, being separated from me, ye can do nothing.*

There are *two* things to be explained in the words, and then I shall come to the assertion or proposition contained in them.

First, What is here meant by being *without Christ*, or *out of him*.

Secondly, In what sense and with what limitations we are to understand that expression, *we can do nothing*.

First, What is here meant by being *without Christ*, or *out of him*. *Out of me ye can do nothing*; that is, unless we be united to him, and by virtue of that union derive from him the supernatural aids and influences of his grace, *we can do nothing*. 'Tis true indeed, that without God we can do nothing; we cannot think, or speak, or do any natural action, without the common assistance and concurrence of his providence; for *in him we live, and move, and have our being*. But this assistance is natural and ordinary, and commonly afforded to every man in the world: But the grace and assistance of Christ signifies something extraordinary and supernatural, that which divines mean by *supernatural grace*, in opposition to the ordinary concurrence of divine providence to all the actions of men.

Secondly, In what sense, and with what limitations we are to understand that expression, *we can do nothing*: *Without me ye can do nothing*. And this is necessary to be limited to such effects as our Saviour was speaking of, *viz.* the proper acts of a christian life, obedience to the laws and precepts of the gospel, which our Saviour here, in pursuance of the allegory, calls *bearing fruit*, and *bringing forth much fruit*. For if it be not thus limited, but extended to all kinds of actions, natural or civil, it is not true that we cannot do these without supernatural assistance, and the grace of Christ. For these we may do by the common and natural assistance and concurrence of God, equally afforded to men; nay, more than this, we may by this common assistance do those actions, which tend to make us spiritually good, and are the means appointed by God for that purpose. We may go to church, we may read and hear God's word, and upon the hearing of it may reflect upon the actions of our lives, and may be convinced of our sin and danger, and upon this conviction, may beg God's mercy and grace to reform and grow better. But then we cannot effect this without supernatural grace and assistance. So that this assertion here in the text, is to be limited to the purposes of regeneration, and sanctification, and perseverance in holiness; that a man cannot make himself good, he cannot convert and change himself, nor by his own strength continue and hold out in a good course; we can do nothing of this, without the grace and assistance of Christ.

So that the plain design of this proposition here in the text, is to assert the necessity of supernatural grace, to make men good, and to make them persevere in a course of holiness and obedience. In speaking to this argument, I shall,

First, Shew what it is we mean by the supernatural grace and assistance of Christ.

Secondly, That to this the scripture doth constantly attribute our regeneration, and sanctification, and perseverance in holiness.

Thirdly, That there is great reason to assert the necessity of God's supernatural grace and assistance to these purposes.

Fourthly, That this supernatural grace and assistance does not exclude, but suppose the concurrence of our own endeavours.

Fifthly, That this grace and assistance is derived to us from our union with Christ.

First, What we mean by the supernatural grace and assistance of Christ. Whatever natural power we have to do any thing, is from God, and an effect of his goodness; but God considering the lapsed and decayed condition of mankind, sent his Son into the world, to recover us out of that sinful and miserable condition

tion into which we were fallen, to reveal eternal life to us, and the way to it, and to purchase happiness for us, and to offer it to us upon certain terms and conditions to be performed by us: but we being weak and without strength, slaves to sin, and under the power of evil habits, and unable to free ourselves from this bondage by any natural power left in us, our blessed Saviour, in great pity and tenderness to mankind, hath in his Gospel offered, and is ready to afford to us an extraordinary assistance of his grace and Holy Spirit, to supply the defects of our natural power and strength. And this supernatural Grace of Christ is that alone, which can enable us to perform what he requires of us. And this, according to the several uses and occasions of it, is by divines called by several names. As it puts good motions into us, and excites and stirs us up to that which is good, 'tis called *preventing grace*; because it prevents any motion or desire on our parts: as it assists and strengthens us in the doing of any thing that is good, it is called *assisting grace*: as it keeps us constant in a good course, it is called *persevering grace*: and may have several other denominations, in several other respects: for it is suited to all our occasions and necessities.

Secondly, To this grace and assistance of God, the Scripture doth constantly attribute our regeneration, and sanctification, and perseverance in holiness. We are said to be *born again of the Spirit*, to be *sanctified by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, to be *led by the Spirit of God*, and *through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the flesh*; to do all things through Christ strengthening us, and to be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. All which, and many more texts that I might instance in, do plainly express to us the supernatural assistance of Christ, whereby we become good, and are enabled to do any thing that is good, and preserved and continued in a good course. As the Scripture doth every where attribute sin to our own corrupt hearts, and to the temptation and instigation of the Devil; so does it constantly ascribe all the good that we do, to the grace of Christ, or, which is all one, to the blessed motions and assistances of God's Holy Spirit. For *the Spirit of God is called the Spirit of Christ*, yea *Christ*, Rom. viii. 9, 10. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin.* By which it is evident, that *the Spirit of God*, and *the Spirit of Christ*, and *Christ*, do in this text signify one and the same thing.

Thirdly, There is great reason to assert the necessity of this grace and assistance to these purposes, whether we consider the corruption and impotency of human nature, the strange power of evil habits and customs, the fickleness and inconstancy of human resolution, or the malice and activity of the Devil to seduce and tempt us to sin.

1. If we consider the corruption and impotency of human nature. This the light of nature cannot but acknowledge. The philosophers and wise men among the Heathens, were sensible of a great depravation in our souls, and degeneracy from the divine life; and therefore they prescribed several ways and methods for the purifying of our souls, and the raising of them to that purity and perfection, to which they supposed they were designed: but they were wholly ignorant from whence this depravation came; and therefore many of them supposed a pre-existence of souls; that is, that our souls, which now inhabit these bodies, had lived in a former state, and for some faults they had committed in that state, were by the justice of God sentenced to be imprisoned in these bodies, as a punishment for their former sins. They could not imagine that our Souls came impure out of God's hands; and to avoid that inconvenience, they imagined a former state wherein they had sinned. And this was the best account they could give of the general depravation of mankind.

But the scripture hath given us a more certain account of this; that *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*. This is the true source and original of the universal degeneracy of mankind, and of the weakness and impotency of human nature. The fall of our first parents hath derived corruption and weakness upon the whole race and posterity of Adam; for *whatsoever is born of the flesh, is flesh*.

So that considering our natural impotency, there is great need of a supernatural and extraordinary power and assistance, to recover us from this degeneracy, and

to renew us after the image of him who created us in righteousness and true holiness. And therefore when the Scripture speaks of the redemption of Christ, it represents our condition, not only as miserable, but helpless; Rom. v. 6. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. When mankind was under an utter impotency of recovering it self out of that state of sin and misery into which it was plunged, in the fulness of time, that is, when God thought it most convenient, he sent his Son into the world, to die for sinners; and by that Spirit which raised him from the dead, to enable us to mortify our lusts, and to rise to newness of life.

2. The necessity of this grace and assistance will farther appear, if we consider the strange power of evil habits and customs. The other is a natural, and this is a contracted impotency, whereby men make themselves much weaker than they were by nature. The habits of sin being added to our natural impotency, are like so many diseases superinduced upon a constitution naturally weak, which do all help to increase the man's infirmity. Evil habits in Scripture are compared to bonds and fetters, which do as effectually hinder a man from motion, and putting forth himself to action, as if he were quite lame, hand and foot. Habit and custom is a kind of second nature; and so far as any thing is natural, so far it is necessary, and we cannot do otherwise. By passing from one degree of sin to another, men become fix'd and harden'd in their wickedness, and do insensibly bring themselves into that state, out of which they are utterly unable to recover themselves. When men have been long accustomed to evil, and are once grown old in vice, it is as hard to reform and rectify them, as to recover a body bowed down with age, to its first straightness. When men have continued long in a sinful course, they are almost under a fatal necessity of being wicked, and under all imaginable disadvantages of contributing any thing to their own recovery. The Scripture represents the condition of such persons to us, by such things as are naturally impossible. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.* Now this consideration added to the former, to the impotency of nature, the strength of evil habits, is still a farther evidence of the necessity of supernatural grace and assistance for our recovery. For the greater our impotency is, so much more need is there of an extraordinary power and assistance, to enable us to do our duty.

2. This will yet farther appear, if we consider the inconstancy and fickleness of human resolution. Suppose that upon hearing the terrible threatnings of God's word against sin, or upon the natural checks and convictions of conscience for having done wickedly, a sinner should of himself (as there is reason enough for it) entertain a purpose and resolution of breaking off his sinful course; yet how unable would this resolution be to withstand the powerful assaults of temptation, and the violent returns of his own inclinations to his former lusts? This almost every man finds by his own frequent and sad experience, how inconstant his mind is to his own purposes, and how unfaithful and treacherous to his most solemn and severe resolutions; how false we are to ourselves, and to the vows and promises we have made to God, and our own souls, when the occasions and temptations of sin present themselves to us. So that our need of God's grace is in no case more plain and evident, than to keep us steadfast to our resolution of forsaking our sins, and amending our lives; and without this, we find how uncertain and ineffectual all our good purposes are, *like the morning cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away.* So that we must say with the prophet *Jeremy, Chap. x. 23. O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*

4. Besides all these disadvantages from our selves, from the impotency of our natures, and the strength of our lusts, and the inconstancy of our resolutions, we have likewise a powerful enemy without, the Devil, who is very malicious and active to promote our ruin, by keeping us in this slavery. He is the great enemy of our Souls, and his malice will not suffer him to neglect any opportunity of doing us mischief. He observes and watcheth our tempers and dispositions, and accordingly plants his temptations and plays them upon us, where we are weakest, and they may do the greatest execution. So that we are not only weak within, but strongly assaulted without; *We wrestle not only with flesh and blood;*

but with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses. All the powers of darkness are combined against us, to work our destruction; and therefore we have need of an extraordinary strength and assistance, to enable us to contend with such powerful adversaries, upon so many disadvantages. And our comfort is, that God offers his Grace to us, and *that is sufficient for us. Greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.* The Spirit that dwells in good men, and is ready to assist them to all good purposes, is stronger than that evil spirit which is in the world, and goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Fourthly, This supernatural grace and assistance does not exclude, but suppose the concurrence of our endeavours. The grace of God does not do all, without any concurrence on our part. It strengthens and assists us; but does not produce the whole effect, without any activity or endeavour of ours. When our Saviour says, *without me ye can do nothing*, he does imply, that by the assistance of grace we may perform all the duties of the christian life, we may *bear fruit, and bring forth much fruit.* And to keep to the metaphor in the text, the branches of a vine are not merely passive, but contribute their part to the production of fruit, though they derive continual supplies of sap and virtue from the vine. When the apostle says, *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me*, he does not think it a disparagement to the grace of Christ, to say, *he could do all things* by the assistance of it. He acknowledgeth his own impotency and weakness, and glories in the strength and assistance of Christ. But an acknowledgment of impotency does not exclude endeavour; for impotency does not signify an utter want of power, but the weakness and insufficiency of it, that it is disproportioned to the work and duty requir'd. So that tho' *we are not sufficient of our selves* for any thing that is good; yet being assisted by God, we may co-operate with him to the killing of sin, to the *cleansing of our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to the perfecting of holiness in the fear of God.* As the apostles were workers together with God in the salvation of others, 2 Cor. vi. 1. *We then, as workers together with God, beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain; I say, as they were workers together with God in the salvation of others, so may we be said to be; in working out our own salvation; nay, we are commanded to be so, Phil. ii. 12, 13: Work at your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.* So that God's preventing and assisting grace, his *working in us both to will and to do*; is so far from excluding our endeavours, that it is used by the Apostle as a strong reason and argument to the contrary, *work out your own salvation: for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure.* And if this were not so, all the exhortations of Scripture were to no purpose, *our preaching were vain*; and your hearing vain: for nothing can be vainer, than to persuade men to do their duty, if this be true, that God does all, and we do nothing.

Fifthly and lastly, This grace and assistance is derived to us from our union with Christ. So soon as we believe in him, and heartily embrace his doctrine, we are united to him; and if we continue in this faith, *we abide in him, and he in us*; and by virtue of this union, the influences of his grace, the aids and assistances of his Spirit are derived to us, to all the purposes of holiness and obedience, to enable us *to do the will of God, and patiently continue in well-doing, and to preserve us to his heavenly kingdom.*

There is no other mystery in this union, than that which I have plainly told you, that it is effected by your becoming the disciples of Christ, and sincerely embracing his doctrine; that it is continued by our bringing forth the fruits of holiness and obedience. By this we become *branches of that true vine*; and being so, derive sap and virtue from him, the vital influences of his grace and Holy Spirit, to assist us in our duty, and to make us to be *fruitful in every good work, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and the glory of God.*

But when I say this grace and assistance is derived to us from our union, I do not intend to exclude the necessity of God's grace and Holy Spirit to the conversion of a sinner, and his first planting into Christ: but when we say that christians derive the influences of Grace and assistance from their union with Christ, this supposeth them to be christians already, and planted into Christ, and that this
likewise

likewise is the work of God's grace. For if we cannot bring forth fruit, without the aid and assistance of his grace, much less without *that* could we be planted into him, and united with him.

I shall conclude my discourse upon this subject, with *three* or *four* inferences from what hath been delivered.

I. If the grace of God be so necessary to all the ends of holiness and obedience, and to our perseverance in a good course, then there is great reason why we should continually depend upon God, and every day earnestly pray to him for the aids and assistances of his grace, and the influence of his Holy Spirit, to guide, and direct and strengthen us in all goodness, and *to keep us up by his mighty power through faith unto salvation*. For tho' God have promised his assistance to us, and is always ready to afford it; yet we are to remember, that it is a free dispensation of his grace and goodness, *he works in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure*. And the promise of this grace is not so absolute, but that he expects we should earnestly sue and beg to him for it. He hath not promised his *Holy Spirit*, but *to them that ask him*, and that with great earnestness and importunity; *we must ask, and seek, and knock*. Even where he promiseth *to give us a new heart and a new spirit*; yet he says, that *for all these things he will be sought to by the house of Israel*. And tho' sometimes *he be found of them that seek him not*, and do frequently prevent us with his grace, and the motions of his blessed Spirit; yet we have no reason to expect it without our seeking of it.

II. We should thankfully acknowledge and ascribe all the good that is in us, and all that we do, to the grace and assistance of God, exciting and strengthening us to every good work, without which *we can do nothing*, and say, with *David*, *not unto us, not unto us, O Lord; but to thy name be the praise*. And with *St. Paul*, *yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*. As the children of *Israel* were brought out of *Egypt*, and conducted to the possession of the good land (which is a type of heaven) by the presence and power of God going along with them, *not by their own sword and bow, but by a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm*: So if ever we be rescued from the bondage of sin, and quicken'd to newness of life, if ever we be saved, and come to Heaven, we must be assisted and conducted, and *kept by the mighty power of God*: for *by grace we are saved, and that not of our selves, for it is the gift of God*.

III. Let us take heed that we *resist not the Spirit of God*, and *receive not this grace of God in vain*. And this we do, whenever we resist the motions of God's blessed Spirit, and do not make use of that grace and assistance which God offers to us, by being *workers together with God*, and co-operating with his grace by our own sincere endeavours. God's Spirit doth frequently put good motions into us, and is ready to further them, if we comply with them, and to enable us to bring them to effect: but men may, and many times do *resist the Holy Ghost*, and *quench* the motions of that blessed Spirit of grace; and then God justly leaves us, and withdraws his assistance, and takes away his Holy Spirit from us. But if we comply with them, his grace and help is ready to carry us still farther, and to assist us more and more, that we may go *from strength to strength, 'till we come to appear before him in Zion*.

IV. The consideration of our own impotency, is no excuse to our sloth and negligence, if so be the grace of God be ready to assist us. For if *that* be offer'd to us, and always at hand to help us, where men have not provoked God to withdraw it; then it is our own fault, if we do not do our duty, and if we fall short of eternal happiness. For we are really able to do all that which God's grace and assistance is ready to enable us to do. *St. Paul* reckons upon the strength of Christ as in some sense *his power*. *I am able to do all things through Christ strengthening me*.

V. And lastly, The consideration of our own impotency is no just ground of discouragement to our endeavours, considering the promise of divine grace and assistance. Now that God has enter'd into a new covenant of grace with us, and offers us eternal life upon the conditions of faith and repentance and sincere obedience, the greater our weakness is, the more reason we have to expect his grace and assistance; because we know that he deals sincerely with us, and intends to bring us to that happiness which he offers to us; and therefore we are assured that

that he does not command us impossibilities, and seeing we are weak and insufficient of our selves to do what he requires of us, that he is ready to afford us his grace to enable us to do it.

S E R M O N CL.

Of the form, and the power of Godliness.

2 T I M. iii. 5.

Having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof.

TH E Apostle in these words distinguishes two things in religion, which do not, but ought, always to go together, *viz.* the shew and pretence of religion, and the life and power of it. He condemns neither, but blames the separating of them. The latter indeed cannot be without the first; for where-ever religion really is, there will be some appearance of it: But the former may be, and often is, without the latter. Men may make a great shew of religion, and yet be very destitute of the power of it. And such were those persons the Apostle describes here in the text; they were guilty of the greatest faults and vices in their lives, but thought to cloak all these by an outward shew and appearance of godliness. *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.*

*The First
Sermon on
this Text.*

The word *μορφοσις*, which is here translated *Form*, signifies the shew or image of a thing, which is dead and ineffectual: In opposition to the reality and life, which is quick and powerful. And, I think, this word is but once more used in the new testament, and much in the same sense, *viz.* for an empty and ineffectual knowledge of religion without the practice of it. *Rom. ii. 17, 20, 21.* The Apostle there speaks of some pharisaical Jews, who gloried in their knowledge of the law, but violated it in their practice. *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and reatest in the law, and hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thy self? Thou that preacheest, a man should not steal, dost thou steal?* So that a *form of Godliness* signifies an empty shew and profession of religion, without the real effects of it.

And they who are destitute of these, are said to *deny the power of religion*. It is usual in several languages to draw metaphors from words to actions; and men are said to contradict or deny any thing, when they do contrary to what they pretend; and so this phrase is elsewhere used, *Tit. i. 16.* *They profess to know God, but in their works they deny him.* 1 Tim. v. 8. *If any man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith.* The Apostle does not mean that such an one denies the faith by an express declaration in words, but by actions so contradictory to the christian faith, as an infidel would hardly do. *He hath denied the faith, and is worse than an Infidel.*

In the handling of these words, I shall do these four things.

First, Shew wherein a *form of Godliness* consists.

Secondly, Wherein the *power of it* lies.

Thirdly, Give some marks and characters whereby we may know when these are separated, when the *form of Godliness* is destitute of the power.

Fourthly, Shew that a mere *form of Godliness*, without the power of it, is insignificant to all the great ends and purposes of religion.

First, To shew wherein a *form of Godliness* doth consist. In general it consists in an external shew and profession of religion, or of any eminent part of it, or of that which is reputed to be so; and a *form* of religion is more or less complete, according to the extent of it. Some pitch upon one part of religion, and

set themselves chiefly to make a shew of that; others take in more parts of it, and endeavour to express and counterfeit them; so that *the forms* of religion are various and different, and not to be reduced to any fixed and constant standard; but they commonly appear in some one or more of these shapes:

- I. An external devotion.
- II. An orthodox profession of the christian faith.
- III. Enthusiasm and pretence to inspiration.
- IV. A great external shew of mortification.
- V. An imperfect repentance and partial reformation.
- VI. The appearance and ostentation of some particular grace and virtue.
- VII. A great zeal for some party, or opinions, or circumstances of religion.
- VIII. Silliness and freakishness, and either a pretended or real ignorance in the common affairs and concernments of human life.
- IX. Much noise and talk about religion.

These are the several forms of religion which men are wont to assume. Not that these do always go singly; but sometimes men put on one, sometimes more of them, as may best serve their several turns and interests. Nor would I be understood to condemn all these; for several of these particulars which I have mentioned are good in themselves, and necessary parts of religion; but being destitute of other things wherein the life of religion doth consist, they are but *a form of Godliness*.

I. External devotion. This is the most common *form* of religion, and easiest to be assumed, and therefore it is that so many take it up. And this is good in itself, and a necessary part of religion: But if there be no more than this, it is a mere image and picture of religion, abominable to God, and fulsome and odious to discerning men.

Now this external devotion shews it self more especially these *two* ways:

1. In a frequent and diligent use of the means and instruments of religion.
2. In a curious and nice regard to the modes and circumstances of performing these.

1. In a frequent and diligent use of the means and instruments of religion, such as prayer, reading, and hearing the word of God, and receiving of the blessed Sacrament. These are not the life of religion, the great end and design of it, but the means and instruments which God hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of holiness and virtue in us. Many exercise themselves in these with great constancy and devotion, pray to God, and read the bible frequently, go to church duly, and hear God's word attentively, and receive the sacrament reverently, and behave themselves devoutly in all parts of publick worship; and yet all this may be but a mere *form*, and certainly is no more, where the great end of all this is neglected, and men do not sincerely endeavour to do what God's word directs them to, and what they daily pray to God to enable them to do.

For all these means are in order to some farther effect and design. We read and hear the word of God, that we may know his will, and that we may do it; that by the precepts and counsels of the holy scriptures, we may learn and understand our duty; and by the motives and arguments which are there offered to us, we may effectually be persuaded to the practice of it. We pray to God not only for the forgiveness of our sins, but for his grace and assistance, to enable us to mortify and subdue them, and to proceed in all virtue and Godliness of living. We receive the sacrament, to inflame our love to God and our blessed Saviour, to excite in us a greater hatred of sin, and to confirm us in the purpose and resolution of well-doing. These are the great ends for which God hath appointed all these helps and means; and if these ends be not obtained, *in vain do we worship God*, all our religion is but mere shew and pageantry. We are but like the people God himself describes, Isa. xxix. 13. *This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do they honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.* And like those, Ezek. xxxiii. 30, 31, 32. *who spake one to another, every one to his brother, saying, come, I pray you, and bear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song,*
of

of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. This is not to worship God, but impudently to affront him; and if we take this for religion, we put the grossest cheat imaginable upon our selves. Hear how God challenges the people of *Israel* upon this account, *Jer. vii. 2, 3, 4. &c.* Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of *Judah*, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of *Israel*; amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. This is the great end of all religious worship and devotion, the reformation of our lives and actions; and if it have not this effect, it is a cheat. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways, and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever. Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto *Baal*, and walk after other gods, whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, we are delivered to do all these abominations? What greater impudence can there be, than to worship God devoutly, and to live wickedly? This is to declare that we mock God under a pretence of serving him; or else that we believe that God whom we worship allows these abominations, and is pleas'd with them.

2. Others make this form of external devotion yet more compleat, by a curious and nice regard to the modes and circumstances of performing the duties of religion. They are very punctual and exact in all their carriage and gestures, as if they minded nothing else but the outward part of religion.

Not but that great humility and reverence does very well become men in their addresses to God; but then we must be sure that this external reverence be a signification of the inward and real devotion of our minds. For if it be separated from this, it is not devotion, but superstition; it is not to worship God in spirit and in truth, but in bodily shew and appearance only; not to honour the divine majesty, but to fawn upon him and flatter him. And where men are very intent upon these things, and endeavour to outstrip other people in voluntary expressions of outward devotion, it too often happens that such persons are destitute of the substance and reality of religion. They are like the formal complementing sort of people in civil conversation, who commonly have very little in them, and notwithstanding all their smooth outside and appearance, they have neither that solidity nor sincerity which is in many a plain ordinary man.

II. An orthodox profession of the christian faith. This is another form of religion, which the more knowing and inquisitive sort of men are apt to take up and rest in. And this is that which in the *Jewish* religion the apostle calls a form of knowledge, and of the truth in the Lord.

And this is good as far as it goes. But then it must not rest only in the brain, but descend from thence upon the heart and life: otherwise a man may have this form of godliness, and yet be a denier of the power of it. St. Paul puts this very case, that a man may have the theory and knowledge of religion, and yet if it do not produce the fruits of a good life, it is nothing worth, *1 Cor. xii. 2.* Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing. And the reason is plain, because the knowledge of religion is only in order to the practice of it; and an article or proposition of faith is an idle thing, if it do not produce such actions as the belief of such a proposition doth require.

There are many persons in the world very solicitous about an orthodox belief, and mightily concern'd to know what the scriptures, but especially what the councils and fathers, have declar'd in such a matter; and they are nice and scrupulous in these things, even to the utmost punctilio's, and will with a most unchristian passion contend for the christian faith: And yet perhaps all this while they can allow themselves in plain sins, and in the practice of such things as are in scripture as clearly forbidden to be done, as any thing is there commanded to be believed. Whereas religion does not consist so much in nicety and subtilty of

belief, as in integrity and innocency of life ; and the truest and most orthodox persuasion in matters of religion, is but a mere *form* and *image*, if it be not accompanied with an answerable practice ; yea, like the *image* represented to *Nebuchadnezzar* in his dream, *whose head was of fine gold, but the legs and feet were iron and clay.*

Not but that a right belief is of great concernment in religion ; but then this belief must be prosecuted into the proper and genuine consequences of it upon our lives : If it be not, it is unhappy for men that they believe so well, when they live so ill. The devils have a right faith, *St. James* tells us, *they believe and tremble.* And indeed none have so much reason to tremble, as those who believe the principles of religion, and yet are conscious to themselves that they live contrary to them ; because of all persons in the world they are the most inexcusable.

III. Another *form of religion* which many take upon them, is enthusiasm, and pretence to inspiration. And this is a very glorious *form*, which is apt to dazzle and amuse the ignorant, because they know not what to make of it. It seems to be something strange and extraordinary, and yet 'tis nothing but what every man that has confidence enough may pretend to.

There is no christian doubts but that the spirit of God hath heretofore inspir'd men in an extraordinary manner, and that he may do so again when he pleases : But since the great and standing revelation of the gospel, we have reason not to be rash in giving heed to such pretences. If those who pretend to inspiration declare nothing but what is revealed in the gospel already, their inspiration is needless ; if they declare any thing contrary thereto, we are sufficiently caution'd against them ; if any thing besides the revelation of the gospel, but not contrary to it, then we are to expect what evidence they bring for their inspiration. For God does not inspire men for their own sakes, but for the sake of others ; and another man's inspiration is nothing to me, unless he can satisfy me that he is inspir'd. For either I must believe every one that pretends to inspiration, or those only that can make good their pretence. Not every one, for then I yield up my self to the mercy of every confident man, to lead me into what delusions he pleases. If I believe only those who are able to make good this pretence, then am I in no great danger ; for nothing less than a miracle can give me reasonable assurance of another man's inspiration ; and I think few or none of our modern Enthusiasts have so much as pretended to miracles. So that this form of religion is calculated only to impose upon the ignorant, but signifies little among the steady and considerate sort of people.

Nay, if this pretence were real, yet it may be no more than a *form of religion*. For the Apostle supposes that men may *have the gift of prophecy*, and yet *want clarity, without which they are nothing.* And our Saviour tells us, that many shall plead at the day of Judgment, *have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works ?* And yet these very persons for all this may be *workers of iniquity*, and such as our Lord will bid to *depart from him.*

IV. A great external shew of mortification.

This the *Pharisees* of old did much applaud themselves in, they *fasted twice a week.* And this is still a great part of the religion of many in the *Romish Church* ; they impose strict penalties and corporal severities upon themselves ; abstain from several sorts of meats and drinks, watch and afflict their bodies with several sorts of rigors : whereas one severe resolution of a good life well prosecuted, is a thousand times better than all this.

For experience shews us, that men may be very severe to their bodies, and yet favourable to their lusts. The *Pharisees* indeed *fasted often*, but they were very ravenous in another kind, *they devoured widows houses.* It is possible that men may kill themselves by corporal austerities, and yet never mortify one lust ; they may submit to a thousand penances, and yet never truly repent one sin ; they may turn pilgrims and go as far as *Jerusalem* to visit our Saviour's sepulchre, and yet never *know the power of his death.*

Fasting may be a good instrument of religion, if it be discreetly used ; and as it may be used, there may be no religion in it. But as for those other kind of se-

verities,

verities, they are absurd and superstitious, and taken up upon a great mistake of the nature of God; as if he were never well pleas'd, but when we do something very displeasing to our selves; as if he were extremely delighted in the misery and torment of his creatures; and to be cruel and unmerciful to our selves, were the only way to move his compassion towards us.

These are barbarous and heathenish conceits of God; and the absurd practices grounded upon them are no where recommended to us in Scripture, nor have any example there, but only in *Baal's* priests, who lanced and cut themselves, believing that to be a good way to incline their gods to hear them. These are voluntary superstitions, which God hath required at no man's hands. And no wise man can doubt, but that he that really mortifies his lusts, and subdues his passions, may be a good man, though he never whip himself in all his life; and that he that lives soberly, and righteously, and godly, may justly be accounted religious, without turning vagrant, and rambling idly up and down the world. These are such *forms of religion* as can have no esteem and reputation, but in a very superstitious church and age.

V. An imperfect repentance, and partial reformation.

By an imperfect repentance, I mean a trouble and sorrow for sin, without the forsaking of it, and the amendment of our lives; or when, if men do reform in some things they continue in the love and practice of other sins. This is not true repentance; for he that hath truly repented, is heartily troubled for all his offences against God, and resolv'd not to commit the like again; but he that retains any lust, and allows himself in the practice of it, is not troubled that he hath offended God, but hath left his sins for some other reason. For whatever arguments and considerations respecting God will move a man to quit any one lust, ought upon the same account to prevail with him to abandon all. So that whatever trouble and sorrow a man may pretend for his sins, there is no surer sign of an insincere repentance, than if after this he continue in the habitual practice of any known sin.

VI. The appearance and ostentation of some particular grace and virtue.

A man may be mov'd by the inclination of his nature, or upon some interest and design, to the practice of some particular virtue. Some are tender and compassionate in their nature, and that excites them to charity; others of quiet and easy dispositions, and that makes them patient and meek and peaceable; others assume one or more virtuous qualities out of vain-glory, or to serve some other interest. The *Pharisees* were much in giving alms, because this is a piece of religion universally applauded and well spoken of; and therefore though they omitted many other necessary parts of religion, yet they were so cunning that they would not be defective in this; not out of regard to God, but themselves and their own reputation. For as our Saviour observes, they did their alms with such circumstances of vain-glory, as quite blasted the glory of them. *They caused a trumpet to be sounded before them in the synagogues, and in the streets that they might be seen of men, and have glory of them.*

Now though the exercise of every grace and virtue be materially a substantial part of religion, yet the practice of one virtue with the neglect of others, is a shrewd ground of suspicion that it is not virtue but design, that it is not religion but interest which prompts men to it. For if it were religion, and done with regard to God, the very same reason would oblige them to all other parts of their duty as well as that.

VII. A great zeal for some particular party, or opinions, or circumstances of religion.

This *form* is frequently assumed, because men find the greatest shelter and protection under it. He that declares zealously for a party or opinion, and is fierce and eager against those that oppose it, seldom fails to gain the reputation of a religious and godly man; because he hath the vote of the whole party, and a great number to cry him up. And if he be guilty of any miscarriage, unless it be very gross and visible, he shall never want those that will apologize for him, and be ready to vindicate him at all turns. Either they will not believe what is reported of him, but impute it to malice: or they will extenuate it, and ascribe it to human infirmity: but still they cannot but think that he is a religious man, because he is so zealous for that which they esteem to be so considerable a part of religion. Nay such is the horrible partiality and injustice of parties, that a very bad man that appears

pears zealous for their way, shall easily gain the esteem of a holy and religious man, though he have many visible and notorious faults; though he be passionate and ill-natur'd, censorious and uncharitable, cruel and oppressive, sordid and covetous; when another who quietly and without any noise and bustle, minds the substantial parts of religion, and is truly devote towards God, just and peaceable, and charitable towards men; meek, and humble, and patient, kind and friendly even to those that differ from him, shall hardly escape being censur'd for a lukewarm, formal, moral man, destitute of the grace of God and of the *power of Godliness*.

So likewise zeal for or against indifferent circumstances of religion, is another *form of Godliness* which many appear in. And commonly such persons, the more destitute they are of true piety and virtue, the greater stir they keep about these things, that they may seem to be something in religion; just like those, who being conscious to themselves that they are defective in true and useful learning, that they may not seem to be so, are always troublesome with the shreds and ends of it.

Now the indifferent circumstances of religion are things which no man ought to have the face to trouble himself about, that neglects the weighty and substantial duties of it. No man that hath *a beam in his own eye*, ought to be concerned for *the mote that is in his brother's eye*. Indeed he that is careful of the main parts of religion, may and ought to be concern'd for the other in their due place, so far as the order and decency of God's worship, and obedience to authority, and the peace of Christians is concerned in them. But to place all religion in a zeal for or against these things, is one of the thinnest and slightest *forms of religion*.

VIII. Silliness and freakishness, and either a pretended or real ignorance in the common affairs and concerns of human life.

This may seem at first hearing to be a very odd *form of religion*, and indeed so it is; yet in several religions, men have appear'd in it with great applause and acceptance. Among the *Turks* ideots and madmen are mightily reverenc'd, it being always taken for granted that they are inspir'd. And among the *Papists*, the most eminent of their Saints, if their legends do not belye them, especially *St. Francis* and *St. Dominick*, are magnified scarcely for any other reason, but for saying and doing the most silly and ridiculous things. What can be imagin'd more foolish and fanatical than *St. Francis's* stripping himself of his cloaths, and running about naked? Than his frequent preaching to the birds, and beasts, and fishes? Was ever any thing more nauseously ridiculous, than his picking up the lice which were beaten off his cloaths, and putting them in his bosom? which is magnify'd in him as a profound piece of humility; as if nastiness were a Christian grace. These and many more such freaks which are related in his life as instances of his great sanctity, serve to no other purpose, but to render religion ridiculous to any man of common sense. As if to be a *spiritual man*, and a *mere natural*, were all one, and as if this were a good consequence, that a man cannot chuse but be very knowing in religion, because he is very silly in all other things; and must needs have abundance of grace, because he hath no wit. It is pity it should be so, but I am afraid it is too true, that the greatest mischiefs that have been done to the world, have been done by silly well-meaning men.

Lastly, Great noise and talk about religion.

This is as empty a *form* as any of the rest, and yet this does strangely please and satisfy a great many. If a man do but mix something of religion with all his discourses, and be often speaking of God and heavenly things, this passeth for a more than ordinary character of a religious man. And many deceive themselves with it, they have talk'd of religion so long, 'till they believe they have it.

Not but that this is a good thing, provided it be ordered with discretion and humility, and be not forc'd and affected, impertinent and troublesome. But then we must have a great care that other things be answerable. Our lives must justify our godly talk, and our actions must give weight to our words; for nothing is more odious, than a religious and good discourse from the mouth of a bad man. This made our Saviour so full of indignation against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, they were not what they appeared to be in their discourse and outward garb. *They said and did not*, therefore he compares them to *whited walls and painted sepulchres, that were beautiful indeed without, but within were full of all uncleanness and rottenness*.

'Tis true indeed, that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*: if religion be within, it will appear in men's words as well as actions; this is a fire that will break out: but the best men are very modest, and make little noise, do nothing out of ostentation and to be taken notice of, and had rather *refrain from good words*, than to make an unseasonable shew of religion.

Speech is intended to signify the inward sense of men's minds, but it does not always do so; men may be full of religious talk, when there is nothing of religion in their hearts, nothing answerable in their lives; men may speak like angels and yet do like devils.

Therefore let no man deceive himself, or think to deceive others with this appearance of religion: for let men talk never so piously, every considerate man knows that there is more of true religion in one good action, than in a thousand good words.

And thus I have done with the *first* thing, *viz.* wherein a *form of religion* doth consist.

Secondly, Wherein the *power of Godliness* doth consist. And because it is very material to be rightly informed in this, I will reduce the several particulars to these *four* general heads.

- I. A due sense of God, and suitable affections towards him.
- II. A sincere and diligent use of the means and instruments of religion.
- III. A firm and steady resolution of well-doing:
- IV. As the proper and genuine effect of all these, the practice of a good life, in the several parts and instances of it.

I. A due sense of God, and suitable affections towards him. This is the principle and fountain of all religion, from whence all actions of piety and goodness do spring.

Under this I comprehend a lively sense of God's Being; which the Apostle tells us is fundamentally necessary to all religion, *He that cometh to God must believe that he is*. This is the great spring of all religious motions, and of our dependence upon him, the lively sense whereof will make us humble and thankful, and teach us *to acknowledge him in all our ways*, and to refer all our concerns to him; and of our subjection to him, which will make us obedient to his laws, and submissive to his pleasure; nothing being more reasonable than that he that gave us our lives should have the entire government and disposal of them; than that he that made us what we are, should command us what we should do. In short, this comprehends faith in God, or a readiness to assent to what he reveals, with the fear and the love of God, which are the great principles of religion.

II. A sincere and diligent use of the means and instruments of religion, such as prayer, reading, and hearing the word of God, and receiving the sacraments. These are the means which God hath appointed for the improving of us in holiness and goodness; and we sincerely use these means, when we really aim at this end; when we pray, and read, and hear, and meditate on God's word, and receive the sacraments, that we may truly become better, more holy and virtuous in all manner of conversation; and do not rest in the use of these means, as if a man were a religious and good man, because he prays often, and every day reads the Bible, and goes to all the sermons he can hear of, and takes all occasions to receive the sacrament. The life of religion does not consist in the bare use of these, but in the real efficacy of them upon our lives. It is a very good caution which St. John gives us, *Be not deceived, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* 1 John iii. 7. Men are apt to impose upon themselves, as if they could be righteous, and approve themselves to God, upon some other terms, whereas only *they that fear God, and work righteousness, are accepted with him*.

I do not speak this to undervalue the exercises of religion, but to inform men of the true nature and design of them. Be as diligent as thou wilt in the exercises of piety and devotion, but be sincere in the use of those means; do not satisfy thyself in the performance of those duties, unless thou find the effect of them upon thy heart and life, always remembering that *not the hearers of the word, but the doers of it are blessed*, that the *prayer, and all the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord*.

III. A firm and steady resolution of well-doing. This is the result of a true and sincere repentance, and the great principle of a new life; and if it be firm and steadfast, it will derive its influence into all our actions; but if it be wavering and inconsistent, it is only the occasion of a religious mood and fit, but not the principle of a religious state. Therefore it concerns us to strengthen this principle, and to be true to it, when we have once taken it up; for whenever we quit it, we break loose from God and religion at once, and cast ourselves back into a much more dangerous state than we were in before.

There is no doubt, but that the Devil and our own corrupt hearts will make many assaults upon such a resolution, and raise all their batteries against it, because it is our main fort, and the great security of our souls, and so long as we maintain that, we are safe; and therefore it had need be a mighty resolution that is able to stand out against such opposition.

But what are *we* that we should take up such a resolution, and what is our strength? We are weak and *unstedfast as water, reeds shaken with the wind; we are not sufficient of our selves, as of ourselves, for any thing that is good; the way of man is not in himself, nor is it in man that walks to direct his steps*: but we have a greater strength than our own to rely upon, and greater than that of any adverse power that can set itself against us; we have God on our side, and the assistance of his grace to back and fortify these holy resolutions; so that we have no reason to despair of success and victory, if we be not wanting to our selves; for *God's grace is sufficient for us; greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world*.

IV. and *lastly*, which is the proper and genuine effect of all these, the practice of a holy and virtuous life in all the parts and instances of it. And unless this effect be produced, we want the surest evidence of the former: for it is not credible, that that man hath a due sense of God, and pious affections towards him, or does sincerely exercise himself in the duties of religion, or is firmly resolved in well-doing, who does not shew forth the effects of all this in a good conversation. Thus St. James reasons, *Chap. iii. 13. Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you? that is, instructed in the Christian knowledge, in the heavenly wisdom; let him shew forth out of a good conversation his works*.

So that herein *the power of godliness* doth visibly appear, in the course of a good life; and 'tis the very design of the Apostle in this chapter to declare this to us, as will appear to any one that considers the description here given of those persons, who under a *shew of religion, denied the power of it*; they were such as notwithstanding all their pretences to godliness, allowed themselves in several vices, and lusts, and passions, and were destitute of the virtues of a good life, they were selfish, and covetous, and vain-glorious, and proud, evil-speakers, disobedient to parents, unthankful to their benefactors, filthy and impure, treacherous, heady, conceited, sensual and voluptuous; so that whatever appearance of godliness they made, they were almost as bad as could be imagined; there is hardly a fuller catalogue of sins to be met with in the Bible: besides that all these vices are such as are plain and evident in the lives of men.

So that upon the whole matter, it is very clear wherein the Apostle mainly places *the power of godliness*, namely, in the real effects of religion, such as are the mortifying out lusts, and subduing of our passions, the government of our tongues, and the several virtues of a good life.

1. In the mortifying of our lusts, the lusts of intemperance and uncleanness, covetousness, and ambition. He that is a slave to any of these, his religion is but a *form*, how glorious a shew soever it may make. *Fleshly lusts war against the soul, and will finally ruin it. Covetousness and pride are enmity to God. God resists the proud afar off, and the covetous man the Lord abhors*.

2. In the subduing of our passions, wrath, hatred, malice, envy and revenge. They are the very nature and properties of the Devil, and dispositions as contrary to God, as light is to darkness; therefore whoever allows himself in these, whatever pretences he makes to religion, is really a bad man. This St. John tells us is a plain case, *1. John iii. 10. Whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. Jam. iii. 14, 15. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lye not against the truth, that is, do not pretend to be religious; this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish*.

3. In the government of our tongues. This is a great effect of religion, to *keep our tongues from speaking evil*, from backbiting, and flandering, and censuring, and reviling, from prophane swearing and cursing, lewd and filthy talking. When mens tongues run out into these disorders, it is a sign that they are not under the government of religion, and that the fear of God hath not seized upon their hearts; for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. So St. James tells us, Chap. i. 26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart; this man's religion is vain*. And on the contrary, it is a good sign that religion hath some power over men, when it restrains them in this kind. So the same Apostle tells us, Chap. iii. 2. *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*.

4. In the several virtues of a good life, in opposition to these and all other vices; such as are truth and justice, humility and meekness, patience and contentedness with our condition, peaceableness and charity to those that are in want and necessity, a readiness to forgive our enemies, and an universal love and kindness to all men. I have not time to recommend these particularly to you, the Scripture does it frequently and fully, telling us that these are *the will of God*, and *the divine nature*, *the new creature*, *pure religion and undefiled*, *the wisdom that is from above*, *the fruits of the Spirit*, the proper and genuine effects of true piety, the sensible and substantial evidences of our love to God, the things wherein *the kingdom of God consists*, and that *he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men*; but he that neglects these, whatever form of Godliness he puts on, is a denier of the power of it. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil, he that doth not righteousness is not of God*.

Thus I have done with the second thing I propounded to speak to, namely, where-
in the power of Godliness consists. There are two other particulars remaining, which I shall reserve to a farther opportunity.

S E R M O N C L I.

Of the form, and the power of Godliness.

2 T I M. iii. 5.

Having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof.

THE third thing propounded, was to give some marks, whereby we may know when these are separated, when there is a form of religion without the power of it. *The Second Sermon on this Text.*

I need not insist long upon this, because this will in a good measure appear by the account I have given of these two severally, of the form of religion, and of the power of it; for he that considers wherein each of these consists, will easily judge when they are separated. But yet, that we may be sure not to mistake in a matter of so great concernment, I will instance in two or three gross and palpable characters of this, and they are so comprehensive as to contain most of the rest.

I. He hath only a form of Godliness, who minds merely the external part of religion, without any inward sense of it.

II. He that useth only the means of religion, without regard to the end and effect of it.

III. He that is grossly and knowingly defective in the practice of any part of it.

I. He hath only a form of Godliness, who minds merely the external part of religion, without any inward sense of it. He that worships and serves God outwardly, but hath no inward reverence and esteem for him, who cares not, so the work be done, and the duty perform'd, with what heart and affection he does it.

This is a mere carcase of religion, which is so far from being pleasing to God, that it is intolerably offensive to him; for tho' it be outwardly an honour done to God, yet really and in truth it is a contempt of him.

And yet it is to be fear'd, that this is a religion which many in the world chuse and content themselves with. They can serve God an hour together, and mention his name an hundred times, without ever thinking of him, or being affected with the business they are about: Nay, which is worse, this is a religion which a great part of the world use and cannot help it; I mean all those who serve God in an unknown tongue. For how is it possible their minds and hearts can be concern'd in a service they do not understand? They may possibly have a devout mind in general; but they cannot exercise any acts of devotion in the particular service they are engaged in. The best of men are apt enough to let their thoughts swerve, and go astray from God when they are worshipping of him, though they understand the service they are about; but when they do not understand, it is impossible their minds and thoughts should go along with it, and be concerned in what is done. This is properly, and in the strict sense of the word *μὲρ φωνῆς εὐσεβείας*, an image of religion and devotion, without any life or sense. And if to have our bodies put in a devout posture, to move our hands, and lips, and eyes, without understanding the service we offer to God, may be accounted worshipping of him, this is a service that may be performed by poppets as well as Men. *God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. In Spirit and in truth*, in opposition to a mere bodily service, and external shew of Devotion. God who is a Spirit, must be worshipp'd with our Spirits. He expects from reasonable creatures a reasonable service; and that service only is reasonable, which is dictated by our understandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections: And to worship him otherwise, is to offer a sacrifice without a heart; it is to *offer the lame and the blind in sacrifice*, which would be an affront to our governor, much more to the great King of the world. Whatever we do in the service of God, we must *do it heartily as to the Lord*, because he is *the searcher of hearts, and all things are open and naked to the eyes of him with whom we have to do*.

II. He hath only a form of Godliness, that useth only the means of religion, without regard to the end and effect of them. A man may exercise his understanding in the service of God, and his heart may be touched, and his affections moved in prayer, and at the hearing of God's word, and the receiving of the Sacrament, and yet this may be but a form of religion, if it go no farther. If we do not forsake those sins we confess to God, and daily beg the pardon of; if we do not truly and heartily endeavour that we may live godly and righteous, and sober lives, as well as pray that we may do so; if the counsels and directions of God's word have not an influence upon our lives; if we be not awed by the threatnings of it to leave our sins, and encouraged by the promises of it to *cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, and to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*; we use the means of religion to no purpose, and we discredit the institutions of God, because we make no proficiency under them. We are just like the Disciples of those formal professors of religion, whom the Apostles describes after the text, who are *ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*. It seems they used the means of instruction, and continued to use them, *they were ever learning*; but all this while they were under the dominion of sin, and the power of their lusts; *they were laden with sin, and led away with divers lusts*, and so they never attain'd to that which the Apostle calls *the knowledge of the truth*, that is, such a knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, as is accompanied with a suitable practice, according to that of our Saviour, *John viii. 31. If ye continue in my word, that is, if ye practise my doctrine, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*. Then men come to the knowledge of the truth, when it frees them from the slavery of sin. If our knowledge have not this effect, it signifies nothing, and does not deserve the name of knowledge, because we *know nothing in religion as we ought to know*. 1 John ii. 2, 3. speaking of the knowledge of Christ, *Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith he knows him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*.

III. He hath only a *form of religion*, who is grossly and knowingly defective in the practice of any part of it. And this sort of persons are those, whom the Apostle particularly intended here in the text: for such were they whom he describes by this character, that *they had a form of Godliness, but denied the power of it*. Under the garb of religion which they had put on, they were grossly faulty in their lives and practice, and mainly defective in many of the essential duties of Christianity, they were selfish and covetous, vain-glorious and despisers of others, calumniators and slanderers, undutiful to their superiors, and unthankful to those that had obliged them, fierce and ill-natur'd, treacherous and false to their word, persecutors of those that were good, filthy and sensual; not that every one of them had all these vices, they are so many and gross, that no cloak of religion could have cover'd them; but the Apostle means, that among those that made an empty profession of religion, these vices were visible, some of them in one, and some in another. And the living in any one of these, or any other of the like nature, is inconsistent with Christianity. The power of religion appears chiefly in the subduing of these lusts, and in the exercise and practice of those graces and virtues which are contrary to these. Here the very heart and life of religion lies, and these are the veins in which it runs; and if there be a failure in any of these main virtues of a Christian life, it is a plain case, that we are destitute of *the power of religion*, and do only make a *vain and empty shew of it*. St. James instanceth, as one would think, in none of the grossest and most considerable of these, the government of our tongue; and yet he peremptorily determines, that the want of this virtue is enough to destroy all a man's other pretences to religion, *Chap. i. 26. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceives his own heart; this man's religion is vain.*

So that by the practice or neglect of these main virtues of a good life, every man may examine and judge himself. This is the rule which our Saviour gives to try the religion of men by, *Matth. vii. 16, 17. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.* The force of which reasoning is this, that every tree bringeth forth fruit according to its nature, and by the kind and quality of the fruit, you may certainly know what the tree is. So by the good or bad action of men's lives, you may know by what principle they are govern'd, whether the fear of God, or the love of sin bear sway in them; the course of their lives will discover the bent and inclination of their minds, whatever shew and profession they make to the contrary. *By their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, (there is some profession of religion) shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven; (there is the power of it.)*

I would by no means encourage men to be over-censorious toward others, there is too much of that spirit already in the world; but it is not amiss that men should be strict and severe toward themselves. And would to God men would bring themselves to this test, and examine the truth and sincerity of their religion, not by the leaves of an outward profession, but by the fruits it produceth in their lives. Every man that will but take the pains to look into himself, and to observe his own actions, may, by comparing the temper of his mind, and the general course of his life and practice, with the rules and precepts of religion, easily discern what power and efficacy religion hath on him. A man may as certainly know himself, and make as sure a judgment of his state and condition toward God in this way, *as a tree is known by its fruit.* Therefore let us not flatter our selves; for if we indulge any lust, or irregular passion in our souls, and do not endeavour to mortify and subdue it; if we allow our selves in any vicious practice in our lives; we do but deceive our selves with an opinion of our godliness, and whatever *shew and appearance* we may make of religion, we are certainly destitute of *the power of it*. True religion and godliness is an uniform principle, which inclines a man to all holiness and goodness, and does bias him against all known sin and wickedness. All the motives and arguments of religion, and all considerations of piety, are levell'd against all sin, and tend to engage men to universal holiness of life.

life. *Bonum constat ex integris causis, sed malum ex quolibet defectu*: the practice of any one vice, is enough to render a man a bad man; but there must be the concurrence of all the parts of religion and virtue, to make a man good.

I proceed to the *fourth* thing I propounded, which was to shew, that a *form* of Godliness, without the *power* of it, is insignificant to all the great ends and purposes of religion. The great ends that men can reasonably propound to themselves in being religious, are these *three*:

I. The pleasing of God.

II. The peace and tranquillity of our own minds.

III. The saving of our souls. Now a *form* of Godliness, without the *power* of it, is unavailable to all these purposes:

I. To the pleasing of God. External devotion, and exercising our selves in the means and instruments of religion, and the profession of a right belief, or any other *form* of religion whatsoever, do not recommend any man to the divine favour and acceptance, without the real effects of religion in a good life: nay, so far is it from this, that all *forms* of religion, destitute of the *life and power* of it, are extremely odious and offensive to him. Devotion in prayer, without a holy life, is but a rude and troublesome noise in the ears of the Almighty. *The prayer of the wicked* is so far from being accepted, that it is an *abomination* to him. He does not love to be invoked by unhallowed mouths, and to be praised by the workers of iniquity. Flattery is hateful to a wise man, much more to the infinitely wise God. He cannot endure that men should lift up eyes to him *that are full of adultery, and hands filled with violence and oppression, and tread his courts with feet ready to shed blood*. It is an affront to God to be worshipped by evil-doers, and to see men diligent in reading his word, and attending to his law, who break it every day. *Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest to be reformed, and castest my words behind thy back?* What God says of the sacrifices of the Jews, offered to him by a *sinful people laden with iniquity*, may be applied to the worship of Christians who live wicked and abominable lives, *Isa. i. 11, 12. &c. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me: The new moons, and sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meetings. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth, they are a trouble unto me. I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hand, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when you make many prayers, I will not bear. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well.* This is that which God expects from us, the amendment and reformation of our lives, and without this all our religious addresses to him are nauseous and abominable. God does hardly any where in scripture express so great a detestation of the greatest sins, as he does of the devotion of wicked men. I will but bring one text more to this purpose, *Isa. lxvi. 3. He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man: he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swines blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.* What is the reason of all these severe expressions? Because they were the sacrifices of the wicked, of those who had chosen their own ways, and whose soul delighted in their abominations; they worshipped God according to his will, but lived according to their own; and therefore they were to him no better than an assembly of murderers, and a church of idolatrous worshippers; for this is false worship, to offer sacrifices to God, and to devote our selves to the service of our lusts.

II. Another end of religion is the peace and tranquillity of our own minds. And this is not to be attained upon true and lasting grounds, by any *form* of religion without the *power* of it. Men may delude themselves with some false peace, and make a hard shift to stop the loud and vehement clamours of their conscience; but the guilt of any vitious course of life will frequently recoil upon them, to disturb and interrupt their peace, and to put out their false joy; their consciences will

will ever and anon give them many secret girds and lashes. For no man can knowingly live in the practice of any sin, but he must be guilty to himself; and whoever is guilty, hath received a secret sting into his heart, which is never to be taken out but by repentance, and a thorough reformation. God hath said it, and I doubt not but every sinner finds it true, *there is no peace to the wicked*. Especially when such a man is seized upon by sickness, and approaches in his thoughts near to eternity, then his drowsy conscience awakes like a lion out of sleep, full of rage and fierceness, and all his false peace and comfort vanisheth. *For what is the hope of the Hypocrite when God comes to take away his Soul?* It is, as *Job* elegantly expresses it, *like the spider's web*, artificially wrought, but miserably weak, it can endure no stress, upon the least touch it breaks and vanisheth.

And this is no small disadvantage which a man that hath only *the form of religion* lies under, that in effect he loseth all the pleasure and satisfaction of religion; or if he fancy any hope or comfort to himself, it is built upon a false foundation, which when it is tried, will endure no shock. This is the comparison our Saviour useth in this very case, *Matth. vii. 26, 27. Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not* (here is a *form of Godliness* without the power of it) *shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it*. But real and substantial religion is like a house built upon a rock, which no tempest can overthrow. *Righteousness*, saith Solomon, *Prov. x. 25. is an everlasting foundation*; it is a continual spring of joy and peace. There is a certain unspeakable contentment and delight arising from a good conscience, and from the sincere discharge of our duty, which a hypocrite is a stranger to, and is never admitted to the taste of. Now what an uncomfortable thing is this, for a man to take the pains to seem to be religious, and yet to lose the real pleasure of religion!

III. The great end of all, of being religious, is the saving of our souls. And this end a meer *form of religion* will certainly miss of. No external garb of religion will gain a man admission into Heaven; there is no getting in there in masquerade, no prayers will then avail, tho' never so fervent and importunate. *Many shall say in that day Lord, Lord, open unto us; and yet he will bid them depart from him*. Tho' we had heard Christ himself preach, and had received the blessed Sacrament with him, yet this will not avail. So our Saviour tells us, *Luke xiii. 20. Then shall they begin to say, We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets, and yet he will say unto them, I know not whence you are*. 'Tis not a pretence to inspiration, no, though it were justified by miraculous gifts, that will then stand us in stead. *Many shall say in that day; Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wondrous works?* And yet these shall be rejected. Why, what should be the reason of all this severity? Our Saviour gives us a plain account of it; because they were *workers of iniquity*. Under all these several masks of religion, they were wicked in their lives.

'Tis not an orthodox faith, and the belief of all the articles of christianity, that will save a man, without the works of a good life, *Jam. ii. 14. What doth it profit a man, my brethren, tho' a man say that he hath faith, and hath not works? can faith save him? Thou believest there is one God? thou dost well; the devils believe this too, but they are not so vain as to hope to be saved by this faith; no, they know the contrary, and that makes them fear and tremble. Know then, O vain man, that faith without works is dead*. Thou believest in one Lord Jesus Christ, that came down from Heaven to save us, that was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, and became man that he might bring us to God; that suffered and died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and is ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and from thence he shall come again at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead; thou dost well to believe this: But if thou do not live accordingly, what will become of thee, when the son of God shall come to judge the world? Then the great enquiry will be, how we have lived? What good we have done? So our Saviour represents the proceedings of that great day. *I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick*

sick and in prison, and ye visited me not : therefore, depart ye cursed into everlasting fire. So that it seems here the business will stick, upon the good and bad actions of mens lives, and accordingly sentence shall be pronounced upon them. For God will render to every man according to his works ; to them that by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality ; eternal life : but to those that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness ; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile : But glory and honour, and peace to every man that worketh good ; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile : for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. Still you see that 'tis to the patient continuance in well-doing, to the obeying of the truth, to the working of righteousness, that eternal life is promised : and the wrath of God is threaten'd to them that obey unrighteousness, to every soul of man that doth evil. To the Jew first. Why so ? Because he had great advantage of coming to the knowledge of the truth, which is so much the greater aggravation of his wicked life, and makes his sentence so much the heavier.

Indeed it shall be to men at the day of judgment likewise according to their faith, in a certain sense, that is, according to the doctrine of the Gospel which they profess to believe, according to what our Saviour and his Apostles have taught, that *the workers of iniquity shall depart from him, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord ; and if we live after the flesh we shall die ; that no whoremonger, nor adulterer, nor covetous, nor unrighteous person, shall have any inheritance in the Kingdom of God, and of Christ.* This we profess to believe, and according to these declarations God will proceed with men at the great day. And he that believes this, and yet goes on in an impiety and wickedness of life, tho' his faith will not justify him, yet God will justify his faith, and make it good, when he shall judge the world in righteousness.

Thus you see plainly, that *a form of Godliness without the power*, is insignificant to all the great ends and purposes of religion ; nay, he that takes up in *a Form*, does not only lose the advantages of religion, but he hath *two* great disadvantages by it.

I. He hath the trouble of making a shew of religion, without the real benefit of it.

II. He incurs a heavier sentence upon this very account.

But these with the application I shall refer to the next opportunity.

S E R M O N CLII.

Of the form, and the power of Godliness.

2 T I M. iii. 5.

Having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof.

*The Third
Sermon on
this Text.*

I Come now to shew, that he that takes upon him *a form of religion*, without *the power of it*, doth not only lose all the considerable advantages of religion, but he hath *two* great disadvantages by it.

I. He hath the trouble of making a shew and appearance of religion, without the real benefit of it.

II. He incurs a heavier sentence upon this account, that he hath *a form of religion*, and yet is destitute of *the power of it*.

I. He hath the trouble of making a shew and appearance of religion, without the real benefits of it. And 'tis no small trouble to personate and act a part well, it requires great art and attention, great guard and caution. That which men are prompted to by an inward principle, is natural and easy, it is done with pleasure and

and delight; but whatever is artificial and counterfeit, is stiff and forc'd. *Nemo fictam personam diu sustinere potest, no man can dissemble always*, one time or other he will be surprized and forget himself, and let his mask fall. A form of religion is a dry unpleasant thing, and a continual burden to him that assumes it, and the more outwardly strict and holy he is, he is the more inwardly guilty; his conscience never stings and galls him more, than when he is playing the hypocrite with God and men: whereas a truly good man, when he employs himself in acts of religion, or justice or charity, he doth it naturally, and hath a mighty satisfaction of mind in the doing of it, and if he were permitted to make his own choice, he would not do otherwise; but a hypocrite puts a force upon himself all the while, and acts against his nature and inclinations, every thing he does in religion goes against the grain, and because it is unnatural must be uneasy; his outward conversation and demeanour is set, and in a frame; he does not move as he would, but as he must, and the secret propensions of his nature are under a continual restraint.

He hath indeed one advantage by his artificial garb, that he can more securely over-reach and defraud others by shew of Godliness, while men are not aware of his dissimulation. But this commonly does not last long, and only serves a man for a few turns: and when 'tis discover'd, the man is lost, and no body will trust him. But suppose he could serve himself of religion this way for some considerable time, where is the advantage? It amounts to no more than this, that the man hath the opportunity of being a greater sinner, of making himself more miserable, and *treasuring up to himself more wrath against the day of wrath*. So that he pays dear for all this in the end and issue, as well as in the way. He spends many a tedious hour in the service of God, and the exercise of religion; more it may be than many do, who save their souls and get to Heaven. For as to the external part of religion, a hypocrite must do all that which a truly religious man does; he must frequent the church, and make as much shew of devotion as the best; nay, it may be he pays more, and fasts oftner, and is more busy, and keeps a greater stir in the outward part of religion, than the sincere Christian; for being conscious to himself of his own hollownes and insincerity in religion, he thinks himself obliged outwardly to over-act it in unseasonable and superstitious observances, and in all other arts of affected devotion; and when he goes abroad into the world, he is forced to lay great restraints upon himself, and to be continually gathering his cloak about him, as being afraid lest any body should spy what is under it. So much more troublesome it is for any man to seem to be religious, than to be so indeed.

II. A mere *form of religion* does upon some accounts bring a man under a heavier sentence, than if he were utterly prophane and irreligious. He that makes a shew of religion, flatters God, but all the while acts and designs against him: whereas the prophane man deals plainly, and though he be a monstrous and unnatural rebel, yet he is a fair and open enemy; and *the kisses of a false friend* are more hateful than *the wounds of an open enemy*. Upon this account it is that our Saviour denounceth so many severe woes against the Scribes and Pharisees, because they were wicked under a shew of religion. *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*: and when he would set forth the severity of the Lord against *the evil servant*, Matth. xxiv. 51. he expresseth it thus, *He shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. As if the punishment of hypocrites were the rule and standard of the severest punishment. *He shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites*.

I will not deny but that a prophane man is a worse example to the world, and may do more mischief upon that account: but the hypocrite is more mischievous to himself, and of the two more odious to God, and sometimes does more prejudice to religion by undermining it, than the other does by all his open assaults and batteries. God cannot endure to be affronted: but he hates to be mocked. So that upon this account, it is like to go harder with the formal professors of religion, than with the open contemners of it.

And thus I have done with the *four* things I propounded to speak to from these words; wherein a *form of Godliness* does consist; wherein the power of it lies; by what

what marks and characters we may know when these are separated; and that a *form of religion* without *the power of it*, is insignificant to all the great ends and purposes of religion; and not only so, but it is greatly to mens disadvantage to assume a *form of Godliness*, if they be destitute of *the power of it*.

All that now remains is to draw some inferences from this discourse by way of application; and they shall be these *three*.

First, To take heed of mistaking *the form of religion*, for *the power of it*.

Secondly, To take heed of being captivated and seduced by those who have only a *form of Godliness*.

Thirdly, To persuade men to mind the life, and *power*, and substance of religion.

First, To take heed of mistaking *the form of religion*, for *the power of it*. The Papists have almost confined the words *Religion* and *Religious* to cloisters and monks; and they make a religious life to consist in *Masses* and *Ave Marias*, and *Pater-nosters*, in the observation of *canonical hours*, and the distinction of meats and habits, in coarse cloaths, and a dissembled poverty, and several bodily rigors and severities. As if to make a man a religious and good man, it were necessary that he should be dress'd fantastically, and in a great many indifferent things be different from other men. Nay so far doth this superstition prevail, that a great many think that they should hardly get to Heaven without it, or that it will be very much for their advantage, if they be buried in the habit of a religious man: as if to be put in a monk's coul, would give a man the start of other people at the resurrection. But what reason is there that the name and title of *Religion* should be appropriated to these usages? Does the Scripture any where constitute religion in these things, or confine it to them? Are not these voluntary things, which God ties no man to? Whence then come they to swallow up the name of *Religion*, and to engross it to themselves, as if they were the very life and soul of Christianity; when the great author of our religion *Jesus Christ*, and his blessed Apostles, never spake one word of them. What an abuse of language is this, to confine the name of *Religion* to that which is not so much as any part of it!

But the church of *Rome* is not alone guilty of this; among our selves it is very ordinary to mistake *the form of Godliness* for *the power*, though the mistake is not so gross, as in those particulars I have mentioned. How many are there, who talk as if *the power of Godliness* consisted in nothing else but a daily task of devotion, in frequent hearing of sermons, and a strict observation of the Lord's day. These are very good things; but they are but a *form of Godliness*, and may be, and often are without *the power of it*, they are but the *means* and *instruments* of religion, but not the great *end* and *design* of it, that consists in the renewing of our natures, and the reformation of our lives; in *righteousness* and *true holiness*; in *mortifying the flesh with the affections and lusts of it*, such as are *adultery, fornication, hatred, variance, wrath, sedition, envying, murder, drunkenness*: for they which do such things, cannot inherit the kingdom of God; and in the *fruits of the Spirit*, such as are *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance*, as the Apostle reckons them up, *Gal. v. 22*. These are real and sensible effects of religion; and the means of religion, if they be sincerely used, do all tend to the begetting and increasing of these in us: so that it is a gross mistake to talk of *the power of religion*, without these. Whoever is destitute of these, whatever attainments in religion he may pretend to, is got no farther than a *form of Godliness*, he is not yet under *the power of it*. This is the *first*.

Secondly, Let us be cautioned against being captivated and seduced by those, who have only a *form of Godliness*. This is the Apostle's exhortation here in the text, *From such turn away: for of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women*. To the same purpose is our Saviour's caution, *Matth. vii. 15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*. And that we may know how to avoid them, our Saviour bids us to observe their lives, *Ye shall know them by their fruits*. He does not bid us examine their opinions, and try their pretences to inspiration; that is a thing many times above the capacity of the ordinary sort of men; but their lives and actions are open to every man's view; and though it is possible men may counterfeit

counterfeit even in this, yet they seldom do it so exactly, as not to betray themselves some time or other: however, this of all other is the easiest and surest rule; *By their fruit ye shall know them.*

Therefore if any man pretend to any new discoveries in religion, beyond what is plainly revealed in scripture, though he appear in ever so sanctimonious a garb, be not moved with this: for the *power of religion* does not consist in any thing now to be discover'd; but in those things which are clearly contained in the word of God, in the precepts and directions, and in the motives and arguments to a good life; and whoever lives according to these, is in the best way to Heaven that any man can put himself into; and he need not trouble himself about those new lights and opinions, which in every age appears like comets, and glare a while, and draw people to gaze upon them, and then vanish. And none are so much to be suspected of a *form of religion*, as those who make frequent changes in it, and wander from one party and opinion to another. An outward form and shape is easily changed; it is that which a man shifts and puts off at pleasure.

Thirdly, To persuade men to mind the power, and life, and substance of Religion. It was the commendation of *Socrates*, the best of philosophers, that he did *Philosophiam de cælo deducere*; bring down Philosophy from heaven to earth, that is, from contemplation to practice, and from being an art of talking and disputing to be an art of living. This I desire may be the aim of all my discourses, to instruct men in religion in order to the practice of it, to teach men to know God, in St. John's sense, 1 John ii. 3. *Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* This is the great end and scope, to which all discourses of religion ought to be level'd. It was a good saying of *Pacuvius*, *Ego odi homines ignava opera & Philosophos sententia*, I hate men that are unactive in their lives, and Philosophers in their opinions. Christianity is the best philosophy, and the most perfect institution of life that ever the world was acquainted withal; and therefore it is much more odious to see men Christians in their profession, and faulty and vicious in their lives; because the very design of the Christian religion, is to give men a perfect and plain law and rule of life, and to enforce this law by the most powerful and prevailing arguments. So that as *Tully* says concerning the philosopher who liv'd but a bad life, that he was utterly inexcusable, *Quod in eo cujus magister esse vult labiter, artem vitæ professus, delinquit in vita*; because he fail'd in that wherein he pretended to be a master, and while he professed to have an art of living better than other men, he offended and miscarried in his life. All defects in the practice, and in the virtues of a good life, may with much more reason and justice be upbraided to Christians, to those who have learned Christ, who have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; to those who are blest'd with the clearest and most perfect revelation which ever God made to the world, the holiest and most reasonable religion, which furnisheth us with the best counsels and directions, the most prevalent motives and arguments, and the greatest helps and advantages to a good life; a religion plain and simple, that hath less of outward form and pomp, and more of substance and reality, than any religion that ever was known in the world.

What a sad thing is it, that a religion so wholly fitted and calculated to the design and purpose of a good life, arm'd with such powerful considerations to engage men thereto, should yet have so little force and power upon the lives of men, as we see it generally to have! As if the grace of God had never appeared to men, to teach them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously, and godly in this present world.

There was hardly ever any age, wherein the form of religion did more abound, and there were greater variety in them; and it is to be fear'd that there was never less of the power and efficacy of it.

I will instance in two great defects in the lives and practice of Christians, which are visible to every one, but are sad indications how little the power of religion prevails among men; I mean the want of common honesty and integrity among men, and the want of peace and love; the first of which is, the great virtue of civil conversation, and the other, the great bond both of civil and ecclesiastical societies. These are two great duties of Religion frequently mention'd, and strictly charged upon the consciences of men in scripture: and yet how rare is

the practice of them in the lives of christians? These are two main defects in religion, and a plain demonstration of *a form of religion*, without *the power of it*.

I. The want of common honesty and integrity among men. So indeed it used to be called, *common honesty*; but it grows so rare now, that it is like to lose that name. *Righteousness, truth and faithfulness*, are almost *failed from among the children of men*; all ranks of men have corrupted themselves in this kind; this is grown almost an universal depravation, there is hardly any trade or profession which hath not something of knavery and falshood woven into the very mystery of it, and is become almost a necessary part of it. Where is the generous honesty and uprightness which did heretofore possess the spirits of men, and which is an inseparable companion of true courage? But we are now passing apace into foreign manners and vices, and any form of religion will serve, when justice and integrity are gone.

II. The want of peace and love. How full of factions and divisions are we? And these manag'd with all imaginable heat and animosity one toward another; as if the badge of christianity were changed, and our Saviour had said, *hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye hate one another*.

All the differences among christians, of what denomination soever, are sadly to be lamented; but I almost despair as to the difference between us and the church of *Rome*, because the reconciliation is impossible, unless they renounce their principles. They cannot come over to us, because they think they are infallible; and we cannot pass over to them, because we know they are deceived; so that there is *a great gulf between us and them*. We must not only renounce the scriptures, but our reason and our senses, to be of their mind. We cannot communicate with them in the Sacrament, because they have taken away one half of it, which is as plainly instituted and commanded, as the other part which is left. We cannot worship the Virgin *Mary*, and the Saints, much less their Images, because it is written, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Thou shalt not make to thy self any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God*. In short, several of their articles of faith are such, as no credulity can swallow; and several parts of their worship are such, as no piety can join with.

But this we bewail, that those who agree in the same essentials of faith and worship, should be so forward to divide and separate from one another, merely upon forms of government, and circumstances of worship. What can justify the breach of communion and peace upon such terms? Either church-government is of divine right, or it is not. If it be, why do not men submit to the form which is establish'd by authority? If it be not, what kind of government can contend for that right, with any equality of advantage, against that which cannot be denied to have almost universally obtained in most ages and parts of the christian world?

As for the circumstances of worship, there is scarce any man hath the face to contend, that any of those used in our church are clearly condemned by the word of God; and what else can make them unlawful? One of the chief causes of separation, is *a form of prayer*; the lawfulness of which our Saviour hath abundantly justified, and I do not think was ever questioned by any writer in the christian church, for near upon sixteen hundred years; and is it worth while to break the peace of the church, and violate one of the greatest precepts of christianity, upon little and slight pretences of unlawfulness and doubtful reasons of convenience and expedience; and about such things as are no more reasonable grounds of quarrels among christians, than the differences of men's stature and faces would be a just ground for mankind to make war upon one another?

Where is *the power of religion*, when the peace and unity of christians is violated upon these terms? It is a sign that the life and substance of religion is little regarded by us, when men can afford to employ so much zeal about these things.

And that men may be effectually persuaded to mind the substance of religion more, let me desire them to imprint these *three* considerations upon their minds:

I. That the parts of religion are subordinate to one another, and are to be minded each in their due place. *The means of religion are less worth than the*

end,

End, and therefore deserves our regard chiefly in order to that. *The Circumstances* of religion are less considerable than the *means* and *instruments* of it, and therefore are to be subordinated to them. *Faith* is in order to the *practice of a good life*, and signifies nothing, unless it produces that. So that the issue and upshot of all, is a holy and virtuous life, *To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world; to love God and our neighbour; to deal justly, and to be kind, and peaceable, and charitable towards all men.*

II. Consider that religion consists in an entire and universal obedience to the will of God, in *a respect to all his commandments*, and *bating every evil way*. Here the *power of Godliness* consists in being *holy in all manner of conversation*.

III. Consider that religion chiefly respects God, and another world. *A form of religion*, if it were artificially contrived, might possibly serve to cheat men, and be useful enough to all the interests and advantages of this world: But we are to do all things in reference to God, who cannot be imposed upon with shews and pretences; and with regard to another world, where no *form of religion* will be current, without *the power of it*. Yea, and in reference to this world, if there be any advantage in seeming religious, certainly the best way to *seem to be so*, is to be *so indeed*.

S E R M O N CLIII.

Of the Necessity of good Works.

T I T. iii. 8.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

THIS Epistle of St. Paul to Titus, whom he had made Bishop of Crete, contains directions how he ought to demean himself in that great charge.

1. By appointing in every city Bishops or Elders, to teach and govern those that were already, or should afterwards by their means be converted to the faith of Christ; and to be very careful to make choice of worthy and fit persons into this high office; men of sound doctrine, and unblameable lives, *Chap. i. from Ver. 5. to the end.*

2. By his own doctrine and conversation among them. And this is the subject of the two following chapters, in which he gives him a strict charge, to be very careful both of his doctrine and his life. Of his doctrine, that it be according to the soundness and purity of the gospel; not such corrupt and adulterate stuff, as the false Apostles and Teachers were wont to vend among them, *Chap. ii. 1. But speak thou the things which become sound Doctrine; which he elsewhere calls the Doctrine of truth which is according to Godliness*, such a doctrine as tends to reform the lives of men, to make them better, and more like to God. And then he should be careful likewise, that his life and conversation be exemplary in all virtue and goodness; without which the best words will be of little weight, and the wisest doctrines and counsels of small efficacy and force to persuade others to the practice of them, *ver. 7. In all things shewing thy self a pattern of good works*. When sound doctrine is seconded by the good life of the teacher, it must have great authority and force of persuasion, *ver. 15. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority; let no man despise thee*. If the minister of God do but so preach and so live, this will give him authority, and set him above contempt; let men despise such an one if they can.

More particularly, as he would have him instruct men in general in all the virtues of a good life; so more especially, the several ages and conditions of men in the duties and virtues respectively belonging to them; to young and old, men and women.

And because great scandal had been brought upon the christian religion, by the undutiful carriage of servants and subjects towards their masters and magistrates, upon a false notion of christian liberty, advanced and propagated by the false Apostles and Gnostic libertines, he gives *Titus* in particular, charge to put christians in mind of their duty in this particular, and to inculcate it earnestly upon them, that the christian religion might not be slandered upon this account, *Chap. ii. ver. 9. 10. Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters, &c. that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Chap. iii. 1. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to be ready to every good work; that is, in short, to endeavour to be good in all relations, and in all sorts and kinds of goodness.*

And then, *ver. 8.* he lays great stress and weight upon this matter, that christians should constantly and upon all occasions be taught the great necessity of the virtues of a good life. *This is a faithful saying, &c.* By which solemn and vehement kind of expression, the Apostle seems to insinuate, that the false Apostles did exalt the virtue of faith, to the prejudice and neglect of a good life; as if by a mere speculative belief and profession of the christian religion, men were discharged and released from the practice of all virtue and goodness. And this is very probable, because we find these kind of licentious doctrines very frequently reflected on, and reproved by the Apostles in their Epistles, and especially by *St. Paul*. The false Apostles made the christian religion a matter of mere speculation and dispute, but laid no weight upon the virtues of a good life. And therefore *St. Paul*, after he had charged *Titus* to inculcate upon christians the necessity of good works, immediately adds, *But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain;* intimating that the false Apostles, instead of pressing the necessity of a good life, did amuse people with these idle notions and disputes.

But to return to my text. *This is a faithful saying.* This kind of preface the Apostle useth several times, but always when he is speaking of something that is of great weight and concernment to us, and which deserves our serious attention and regard; as in *1 Tim. i. 15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. 1 Tim. iv. 8. Godliness is profitable unto all things; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying.* And *2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. This is a faithful saying; If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: If we deny him, he also will deny us.* And so likewise here in the text, *This is a faithful saying, that they which have believed in God, should be careful to maintain good works.* By which you see, that it is not a form which the Apostle useth of course, and applies to any thing, but only to things of more than ordinary consideration and regard, such as are of the essence of christianity, and fundamental to the belief and practice of it.

This is a faithful saying, πιστός λόγος, a credible saying, that which every man that truly understands the nature and design of religion will readily assent to.

And this I will that thou affirm constantly. He chargeth him to preach this upon all occasions, lest the doctrine of justification by faith and by grace, without any works of righteousness proceeding, should be turned into licentiousness, as it had been by some, and men should falsely conclude, that because works of righteousness were not necessary before justification, and to bring men into that state, they were not necessary neither afterwards to our continuance in that state.

The Apostle indeed, did teach that *God did justify the ungodly*, by the grace of the gospel, and *faith in Christ*, that is, that those who did sincerely believe and embrace the gospel, though they had been never so great sinners before, were justified upon that faith; that is, all their former sins were forgiven, and they were received into the favour of God. But tho' works of righteousness were not necessary before their justification, yet they are necessary afterwards, because the faith of the Gospel, and the embracing of Christianity, doth imply a stipulation and engagement on

on our part, to live according to the laws and rules of the Gospel, which do strictly enjoin all kind of virtue and goodness. The covenant of baptism, by which we are enter'd into Christianity, doth contain on our part not only a profession of faith in Christ, but a solemn promise *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.* So that it is the greatest mistake in the world to think, that because we are justified by faith and the profession of Christianity without works of righteousness, therefore we are under no obligation to a good life: for faith in Christ, and the sincere profession of the Christian religion doth imply a good life, and an engagement to the practice of all virtue and goodness, which if we do not perform and make good, we fail in our part of the covenant, and thereby forfeit all the blessings and benefits promised therein on God's part.

Therefore it is observable, that the Apostle, after he had spoken of our justification by grace without works of righteousness, gives this charge to Titus, to press the necessity of good works upon those who did believe and embrace the profession of the Gospel, as it were on purpose to prevent all mistake and abuse of the doctrine of justification by faith, and the free grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ, *ver. 5, 6, 7. Not by works of righteousness which we have done; but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that is, by our solemn profession of Christianity at our baptism; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.* And then he adds, *ver. 8. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works; that is, that they who are thus justified by the faith of the Gospel, should be so far from thinking themselves hereby excused from good works, that they should upon this account be more careful to maintain and practise them, because by the very profession of the Christian faith and religion they have solemnly engaged themselves so to do.*

That they which believe in God; that this, who have taken upon them the profession of Christianity in their baptism. For it is not improbable, that the Apostle having spoken of baptism just before, may by this phrase of *believing in God*, refer to that profession of faith made in baptism, which began with these words, *I believe in God*; and then, *they which have believed in God*, are those who in baptism have made a solemn profession of Christianity: as if he had said, *these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that all that profess themselves Christians be careful to maintain good works.* Or if by the phrase of *believing in God*, we will understand an assent to all divine revelations, more especially that of the Gospel, and the Christian religion, the most perfect that ever God made of his will to mankind, the matter will come much to the same issue.

Be careful to maintain good works. This phrase seems, in the latter end of this epistle, to be used in a very restrained sense; for labouring in an honest calling, *ver. 14. Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.* In the margin of your Bibles you will find it render'd, *to profess honest trades.* Let ours also learn to *profess honest trades for necessary uses*, that is, for the supply of their necessities: but in the text it seems more agreeable to the scope of the Apostle's discourse, to render the phrase of *maintaining good works*, for the practice of all Christian virtues, especially those which are most useful and beneficial to human society; among which, diligence and industry in an honest calling is none of the least considerable, because it follows, *these things are good and profitable unto men.* And indeed these are properly works of goodness, which redound to the publick benefit and advantage.

But *good works* may well be taken in a larger sense for all sorts of virtuous actions. And so it is certainly used several times in this epistle, *chap. i. 16. Unto every good work reprobate*, speaking of all profligate persons who were lost to all virtue and goodness. *Chap. ii. 7. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works.* that is, an example of all kind of virtue. And *chap. iii. 1. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, and to be ready to every good work;* that is, to the practice of all goodness, of whatsoever is honest and virtuous in itself, amiable and commendable in the sight of others, useful and beneficial to any.

Having thus explained the words, I come now to consider the *two* points contained in them,

First, The certain truth and credibility of this saying or proposition, that they which have believed in God, ought to be careful to maintain good works. *This is a faithful saying*; that is, a most evident and credible truth. And,

Secondly, The great fitness and necessity of inculcating this upon all Christians, that the Christian religion doth indispensably require the virtues of a good life. *These things I will that thou affirm constantly*, &c. I begin with the

First of these points, viz. The certain truth and evident credibility of this saying or proposition, that *they which have believed in God, should be careful to maintain good works*. *This is a faithful saying*, *πιστός λόγος*, a saying worthy of credit, a most certain and credible truth. And it will appear to be so, whether we consider the great end and design of religion in general, or of the Christian religion in particular.

I. If we consider the great end and design of religion in general, which is to make us happy, by possessing our minds with the belief of a God, and those other principles which have a necessary connexion with that belief; and by obliging us to the obedience and practice of his laws.

1. By possessing our minds with the belief of God, and of those other principles which have a necessary connexion with it. Such are the belief of the divine perfections, of the infinite goodness, and wisdom, and power, and truth, and justice, and purity of the divine Nature; a firm persuasion of his providence, that he governs and administers the affairs of the world, and takes notice of the actions of men, and will call them to an account for them; of the immortality of our souls, and their endless duration after death, and consequently of the eternal rewards and punishments of another life. These are the great principles of natural religion, which mankind are in some measure possessed with, and persuaded of, without any external revelation from God; and these are necessary and fundamental to religion, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* declares, *Heb. xi. 6. Without faith it is impossible to please God*; that is, there can be no such thing as the practice of religion, without the belief of the principles of it; and what these are he tells us in the next words: *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*.

But then we must not rest here, in the belief of a God and the principles of religion; for this faith is not required of us for it self, but in order to some farther end, which if it be not attained by us, the mere belief of the principles of religion is to no purpose, neither acceptable to God, nor useful and beneficial to our selves. God would not have imprinted the notion of himself upon our nature, he would not have discovered himself to us, nor have required of us the belief of his Being and Providence, merely that we might know there is such a Being as God in the world, who made us and governs us; but that this belief might have its proper influence upon us, to oblige us to the obedience of his laws, which are the proper causes and means of our happiness. It will not avail us at all, nor is it in the least acceptable to God, for men to profess that they know him, when in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate, as the Apostle describes some, *chap. i. 16*. And therefore

2. The great end and design of religion is, that our minds being possessed and prepared by the principles of religion, the belief of these should have its proper influence upon us, which is effectually to oblige us to the obedience and practice of God's laws. Now the laws which God hath given us to live by, as they are the rule and measure of our duty, by the performance whereof only we can hope to gain the favour of God, so they are the proper directions and means in order to our happiness; they teach us both the conditions of our happiness, and the proper qualification and disposition for it.

Obedience to the laws of God is the condition of our happiness, both temporal and eternal, both in this world and the other. The promises which God hath made of temporal felicity and blessings, are upon condition of our obedience to his laws; it is *Godliness* only that hath the promise of this life as well as of the other, 1 *Tim. iv. 8*. A truth so certain and evident, that the Apostle thought fit to add that solemn seal to it, which he prefaceth to the saying in the text, *This is*

a faithful saying. And though God be pleased, out of his excessive goodness to bestow many temporal blessings and favours upon very bad men, that by this *goodness of his* he might lead them to repentance; yet God never made any promise of temporal blessings to wicked men; but on the contrary, hath threaten'd them with great temporal evils and calamities; but all the promises even of temporal good things, are made to the obeying of God's laws; *to them that keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them.*

And this is not only the condition upon which the promises of temporal blessings are suspended, but generally, and for the most part, the natural cause and means of those blessings; for there is no moral duty enjoined by God, no virtue the practice whereof he requires from us, which does not naturally tend to our temporal felicity in this world; as temperance and chastity to that invaluable blessing of health, and to the preservation of our estate, which is wasted by lewd and riotous living; humility and meekness to our quiet and safety; justice and integrity to our reputation and honour, one of the chief instruments of temporal prosperity and success. Kindness and charity, and a readiness *to do good to all men as we have opportunity*, are in their nature apt to recommend us exceedingly to the love and esteem of all men, and to their favourable regard and assistance, when we stand in need of it. And so I might instance in all other virtues, the sincere practice whereof, though it be not in all cases certain and infallible, yet it is the best and wisest course that any man can take, to attain the greatest happiness which this world can afford, and to avoid the greatest miseries and calamities of it: as on the contrary, there is no vice, no wicked practice, but is naturally productive of some great temporal mischief and inconvenience.

And then the practice of virtue and goodness, as it is the absolute and indispensable condition of our future happiness in another world, so is it the necessary and only proper qualification for it, and the certain and infallible means of attaining it.

It is an absolute and indispensable condition of attaining it; and without this, it is in vain to hope for it. As God will certainly punish the transgressors of his laws, so nothing but obedience to them can pretend to his rewards. This God hath most expressly declared, that *without purity and holiness no man shall see him*; that *Christ is the author of eternal salvation only to them that obey him*. And if God had not declared this in his word, the consideration of God's essential holiness and justice would sufficiently assure us of it.

But besides this, in the very nature and reason of the thing, holiness and goodness is the necessary and only proper qualification for happiness. Without the blessed sight and enjoyment of God we cannot be happy, and holiness and goodness can only qualify us for this. For happiness is a state which results from a temper and disposition of mind suited to it; and where this is wanting, the man is no more capable of happiness, than he that is sick is of ease. Virtue and goodness are so essential to happiness, that where these are not, there is no capacity of it. These make us like to God, who is the fountain and pattern of all happiness; and if we be not like to God, we can have no enjoyment of him. And a wicked man, if he could steal into Heaven, into the sight and presence of God, would from the temper and disposition of his own mind, so unsuitable to that holy place and company, be extremely miserable, even in the mansions of the blessed. Such a temper of mind, such a polluted and guilty conscience, as a sinner carries with him out of this world, will accompany him, and remain with him in the other; and guilt is always restless and full of torment; and though God should not punish it with any positive infliction of pain, would of its own nature make a man for ever miserable. So that it is a vain dream and imagination, that any man without the practice of holiness and virtue in this life, can be happy in the other. A sincere and thorough repentance of all our sins will indeed clear our consciences of guilt, and by the mercy of God make us capable of happiness: but it does this by changing our minds, and reconciling them to holiness and goodness, in firm purpose and resolution of a new life; and by changing our lives and actions too, if there be opportunity for it; but till this change be wrought, either in firm purpose, or in real effect, it is impossible we should be happy. And though I will not deny but this may be done by a deep repentance, and such as God sees would prove sincere,

sincere, in the last act of our lives: yet it is extream madness to run such a hazard, because we may be cut off from the opportunity of it; or if God should afford us time and grace to that purpose, it is the hardest thing in the world to have any comfortable and well grounded assurance of the sincerity of it. So that very little hopes of Heaven and happiness can be given upon any other terms, than the general and constant course of a holy and virtuous life; and least of all to those who have all their life long resolved to venture their everlasting happiness upon the infinite uncertainties of a death-bed repentance at the last. But,

II. The truth of this proposition, that *they which have believed in God, should be careful to maintain good works*, or that faith and the virtues of a good life ought to go together: I say, the truth of this will yet be more evident, if we consider the great end and design of the Christian religion in particular, which was to reform the world, to purify the hearts and lives of men from corrupt affections and wicked practices, to teach men to excell in all kinds of virtue and goodness.

And this is every where in the New Testament most expressly declared. The great promise of blessedness is made to the virtues of meekness, and patience, and peaceableness, and purity, and righteousness, as our Saviour expressly teacheth in that excellent sermon of his upon the mount, which is the summary of the Christian religion. *Ephes. iv. 17, 18, &c. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth, that is, now that ye have embraced Christianity, walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ: if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts: and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on that new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members of one another. Be ye angry and sin not, let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying; that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, &c.* So that you see, that unless there be an universal reformation of heart and life, we have not so learned Christ as the truth is in Jesus: we do not rightly understand the Gospel, and the tendency of the Christian religion. *Gal. v. 22, 23, 24. But the fruits of the Spirit, of that Spirit which the Christian religion endows men withal, is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance; and they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts; that is, they that profess themselves Christians, are oblig'd to endeavour after all these virtues, and to put off the contrary lusts and vices. Phil. iv. 8. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. St. James likewise declares to the same purpose the genuine effect of Christianity, which he calls the knowledge and wisdom which is from above: James iii. 13, 14, 15, 17. Who is a wise man, and endowed with knowledge amongst you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness and wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lye not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above; but is earthly, sensual, devilish. And the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. To which I will add but one text more, which is the sum and comprehension of all the rest, and it is Chap. ii. of this epistle to Titus, ver. 11. The grace of God, so he calls the doctrine of the Gospel, The grace of God which brings salvation unto all men, hath appeared, teaching*

teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.

I might proceed particularly to shew, that the whole dispensation and doctrine of the gospel, and all the parts of them, are calculated to raise and exalt human nature to the highest pitch and perfection of virtue and goodness, and effectually to reform the spirits and lives of men.

The dispensation of the gospel, or the christian religion, consists in God's merciful condescension to send his own and only Son in our nature, to live among us, and to die for us. The doctrine of the gospel consists in the things to be believed; the duties to be practised by us; and the arguments and encouragements to the practice of those duties. Now I shall briefly shew, that the design of every part, both of the dispensation and doctrine of the gospel, is to reform the minds and manners of men, and to engage them to the practice of all virtue and goodness. And,

I. For the dispensation of the gospel: by which I mean the gracious method which the wisdom of God hath pitched upon for the salvation and recovery of mankind, by sending his only begotten Son into the world in our nature, to live among us, and to die for us. So that the principal parts of this dispensation are these three:

1. His incarnation, or appearing in our nature.

2. His life.

3. His death and sufferings for us. And I shall shew, that the great design of all this was to reform mankind, and make them better.

1. For his incarnation. The great design of his coming into the world, and appearing in our nature, was this; and this was the reason of the name *Jesus*, given him at his birth, as the Angel tells us, *Matth. i. 21. His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.* *Matth. ix. 13.* He himself tells us, that *he came to call sinners to repentance*; that is, to reclaim them to a better and more virtuous course of life; and *Chap. xviii. 11. The Son of man is come to save that which was lost*, that is, to recover mankind from a state of sin and misery, to a state of holiness and happiness. And *St. Peter*, exhorting the *Jews* to repentance, useth this argument, that for this very end God sent him among them, *Acts iii. 26. Unto you first God sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquity.* *Heb. ix. 26. But now once in the end of the world he hath appeared to abolish sin*, that is, to destroy both the guilt and power of sin. *1. John iii. 5. Ye know that he was manifested, to take away our sins.* And *Ver. 8. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, to destroy the works of the devil.*

2. This likewise was the great design of his life, of his dwelling and conversing with us so long, to teach us by his doctrine in all holiness and virtue, and to give us the perfect pattern and example of it in his life. For his doctrine, I have spoke of that by itself: but besides that, one principal end of his living amongst us, was, that in the course of his life, and all the actions of it, he might give us a perfect and familiar example of all holiness and virtue, and therefore we are commanded to take him for our great pattern. *Learn of me*, saith he, *for I am meek and lowly in Spirit*, *Matth xi. 29. John xiii. 15.* after that great instance of his humility, in washing his disciples feet, he adds, *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*

3. This also was the great design of his death and sufferings. So the Apostles every where teach: *Gal. i. 4. speaking of Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world*, that is, he might rescue us from the vicious customs and practices of the world. *1 Pet. i. 18. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* The death and sufferings of Christ did not only make expiation for our sins, but are proposed to us as a pattern of mortification to sin, and resurrection to a new life, and a most powerful argument thereto. *Rom. vi. 1, 2, 3, &c. and 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. speaking of the love of Christ in laying down his life for us, For the love of Christ, saith he, constraineth us, because we thus judge; that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died*

for them, From whence he infers, *Ver. 17. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* And *Ver. 21. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;* that is, he hath made him who was without sin, a sacrifice for our sins; which should be a strong motive and argument to us, to endeavour after *the righteousness of God.*

II. As the whole dispensation of the gospel tends to this end, so more particularly does the doctrine of the gospel, and every part of it. Now the whole doctrine of the gospel may be referred to these *three Heads*:

1. The things to be believed by us.

2. The duties to be practised. And,

3. The arguments and encouragements to the practice of these duties. And all these have a most direct and proper tendency to reform mankind, and effectually to engage us to the practice of holiness and virtue.

1. The matters of faith proposed in the gospel, have a direct tendency to a good life, and immediate influence upon it. All the articles of our creed, and whatever the christian religion proposeth to our belief concerning God the Father, the Creator and Governor of all things; and concerning Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour; and concerning the Holy Spirit of grace; the catholick church; the communion of saints; the resurrection of the dead, and everlasting life after death: all and each of these are so many arguments and reasons, motives and encouragements to a good life. In general, our *hearts* are said to be *purified by Faith*, *Acts xv. 9.* *1 Tim. i. 5.* Faith is there reckoned among the principal sources and fountains of a good life: *The end of the commandment*, (the word is *πρὸς ἡγέλιαν*) *The end of the gospel declaration is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.* So that a sincere faith is the great principle of charity, which is the *fulfilling of the law*, and comprehends in it the Duties of both tables. And here I might particularly shew, what influence the several articles of the christian faith have upon the practice of holiness and virtue in our lives: but this would be too large a field of discourse; and the thing is very plain and obvious to every man's consideration; and therefore I shall content myself with what I have said in general concerning the influence of faith upon a good life.

2. The duties enjoined by the christian religion do likewise tend more immediately to the same end and design; I mean the laws and precepts of the gospel, which are nothing else but so many rules of good life, and in the main substance of them are the laws of nature cleared and perfected. For *Christ came not to destroy the law*, which was in force before; but to explain and clear it, where, through the corruption and degeneracy of mankind, it was grown obscure and doubtful, and to perfect it, by superadding some rules and precepts of greater goodness and perfection, than seem to have been enjoined by it: as to abstain from all kind of revenge, to love our enemies, and not only to be ready to forgive them the greatest injuries they have done us, but to do them the greatest good, and even to be perfectly reconciled to them after the highest provocations, whenever they are in a meet capacity and disposition for it. So that the precepts of the christian religion are a plain and perfect rule of all virtue and goodness, and the best and most absolute system of moral philosophy that ever was in the world, containing all the rules of virtue and a good life, which are scattered and dispersed in the writings of the philosophers, and the wise men of all ages, and delivering them to us with greater clearness and certainty, in a more simple and unaffected manner, with greater authority, force and efficacy upon their minds, than any philosopher and lawgiver ever did; teaching us how to worship God in the best manner, and most suitable to his nature and perfections; how to demean ourselves towards others with all meekness and humility, justice and integrity, kindness and charity; and how to govern ourselves and our own unruly appetites and passions, and bring them within the bounds of reason, much better than any law or institution that ever was in the world; and all these duties and virtues strictly commanded and enjoined in the name and authority of God, by one evidently empowered and commissioned by him, and sent from heaven on purpose to instruct us in the nature and practice of them. So that the doctrine of the

the gospel, in respect of the laws and precepts of it, is a plain and perfect rule of a good life. And then,

3. The christian religion contains the most powerful arguments and encouragements to this purpose; and these are the threatenings and promises of the gospel.

(1.) The terrible threatenings of eternal misery and punishments to all the workers of iniquity, and wilful and impenitent transgressors of these laws. And this is an argument which taketh the safest and surest hold upon human nature, and will many times move and affect, when no other considerations will work upon us. Many men that could not be wrought upon by the love of God and goodness, nor by the hopes of everlasting happiness, have been affrighted and reclaimed from an evil course by the fear of hell and damnation, and the awe of a judgment to come. To think of lying under the terrible wrath and displeasure of Almighty God to eternal ages, of being extremely and for ever miserable without intermission and without end, must needs be a very dismal consideration to any man that can think and consider: *For who knows the power of God's anger? who can dwell with everlasting burnings?* And yet to this horrible danger, to this intolerable misery, do all the workers of iniquity, every one that lives in the wilful contempt and disobedience of the laws of the gospel, expose themselves, and this as expressly revealed and declared to us, as it is possible for words to declare any thing. *Mat. xiii. 40, 41, 42. So shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth. Matth. xxv. 41. there you have the very sentence recorded, which shall be pronounced upon sinners at the great day; Then shall the king say to them on his left hand, that is, to the wicked, Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, And ver. 46. These shall go into everlasting punishment. And this is that which St. Paul tells us, renders the doctrine of the gospel so powerful for the conversion and salvation of sinners, Rom. i. 16. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth. And ver. 18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And Cap. ii. 8, 9. To them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil. Ephes. v. 6. Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things, viz. the sins he had mentioned before, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. 2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9. When the Lord Jesus, speaking of the judgment of the great day, shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. So that the gospel gives all imaginable discouragement to the transgression and disobedience of God's laws, by denunciation of the greatest dread and terror that can be presented to human nature, enough to make any sensible and considerate man willing to do or forbear any thing, to escape so horrible a danger, to cut off a foot or hand, or to pluck out an eye, not only to restrain nature in any thing, but even to offer violence to it, rather than to be cast into hell fire, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched, as our Saviour expresseth it, Mark ix. 48. This is the first argument from the threatenings. The*

(2.) Is from the promises of the gospel, which are full encouragement to obedience; and there are three great promises made in the gospel to repentance, and the obedience of God's laws.

1. The promise of pardon and forgiveness.

2. Of grace and assistance.

3. Of eternal life and happiness. And these certainly contain all the encouragement we can desire; that God will pardon what is past, assist us in well-doing for the future, and reward our perseverance in it to the end with eternal life; and all this is expressly promised to us in the gospel.

1. The pardon and forgiveness of sins past. *Acts xiii. 38, 39. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.* And this is a great encouragement to amend-

ment, to be fully indemnified from all past sins and transgressions; and this promise is made to *believing*, which includes in it repentance and a better course.

2. The promise of grace and assistance to enable us to all the purposes of holiness and obedience. And this our Saviour has most expressly and emphatically promised to all that are sincerely resolved to make use of it; and that upon the easiest condition that can be, if we do but earnestly pray to God for it, telling us that we may with the same confidence and assurance of success (nay with much greater) ask this of God, as we can any thing that is good, of the kindest father upon earth, *Luke xi. 9.* And surely here is a mighty encouragement to well-doing, to be assured that God is most ready to afford his grace and assistance to us to this purpose, if we heartily beg it of him. So that neither the consideration of our own weakness, nor of the power of our spiritual enemies, can be any discouragement or just excuse to us from doing our duty, since God offers us so freely all the strength that we need, and to endow us with an inward principle of well-doing, more powerful and effectual to all the purposes of holiness and virtue, than any opposition that can be raised against it. So St. *John* assures us, that we have God on our side, and the powerful assistance of his holy Spirit, and therefore are sure of victory in this conflict; *1 John iv. 4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* If the Spirit of God be more powerful than the devil, we are of the stronger side; and we have no just cause to complain of our inability and weakness to do the will of God, since that strength and assistance, which we may have for asking, is to all effects and purposes in our own power. And therefore St. *Paul* made no scruple to call it so, and to say, he was able to do all things, *I am able to do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

3. The promise of eternal life: and this is the great promise of the gospel, and the crown of all the rest, *1 John ii. 25. This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* And this is a reward so great and glorious, and so infinitely beyond the proportion of our service and obedience, that nothing can be more encouraging. What should not men do *in hopes of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised to us?* The expectation of such a reward, so well assured to us, is sufficient to encourage us to do our utmost, and to strain all our powers for the securing and attaining of it, which we cannot do without holiness and obedience of life; for *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* So that all the promises of the gospel are to encourage and strengthen us in well-doing, *to make us partakers of the divine nature, that we should cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.*

Thus you see that the whole dispensation of the gospel, and the doctrine of it, and every part of them, are all calculated to reform the minds and manners of men. This is the great design of the christian religion, and all the parts and powers of it, to clear and confirm and perfect the natural law, to reinforce the obligation of moral duties by severer threatenings, and greater promises, and to offer men more powerful grace and assistance to the practice of all goodness and virtue; and they do not understand the christian religion, who imagine any other end and design of it. There is nothing that our Saviour and his apostles do every where more vehemently declare, than that hearing and believing the doctrine of Christ signifies nothing, without the real virtues of a good life. *Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead, saith St. James.* For men to think that the mere belief of the gospel, without the fruits and effects of a good life, will save them, is a very fond and vain imagination. And thus much may suffice to have spoken concerning the first point.

S E R M O N CLIV.

Of the Necessity of Good Works.

T I T. iii. 8.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

FROM these words I have proposed to handle these *two* points.

First, the certain truth or credibility of this *saying* or proposition, *That they which have believed in God, ought to be careful to maintain good works.* This I have spoken to, and come now to the

*The second
Sermon on
this Text.*

Second, The great fitness and necessity of inculcating frequently upon all that profess themselves christians, the indispensable necessity of the practice of the virtues of a good life. In the handling of this point, I shall do these *two* things.

First, I shall shew the great fitness and necessity of pressing upon people the indispensable necessity of the virtues of a good life. And,

Secondly, Answer an objection or two, to which the preaching of this kind of doctrine may seem liable. I begin with the

First of these, *viz.* To shew the great fitness and necessity of inculcating and pressing upon all christians the indispensable necessity of the virtues of a good life. And this will appear to be very fit and necessary upon these *two* accounts.

I. Because men are so very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and so hardly brought to that wherein religion mainly consists, *viz.* the practice of real goodness.

II. Because of the indispensable necessity of the thing to render us capable of the divine favour and acceptance, and of the reward of eternal life and happiness.

I. Because men are so very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and so hardly brought to that wherein religion mainly consists, *viz.* the practice of real goodness. They are extremely desirous to reconcile (if it be possible) the hopes of eternal happiness in another world, with a liberty to live as they list in this present world; they are loth to be at the trouble and drudgery of mortifying their lusts, and subduing and governing their passions, and bridling their tongues, and ordering their whole conversation aright, and practising all those duties which are comprehended in those two great commandments, the love of God and our neighbour. They would fain get into the favour of God, and *make their calling and election sure*, by some easier way, than by *giving all diligence, to add to their faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and brotherly kindness, and charity.*

The plain truth of the matter is, men had rather religion should be any thing, than what indeed it is, the thwarting and crossing of our vicious inclinations, the curing of our evil and corrupt affections; the due care and government of our unruly appetites and passions, the sincere endeavour and constant practice of all holiness and virtue in our lives; and therefore they had much rather have something that might handsomely palliate and excuse their evil inclinations, than to extirpate them and cut them up; and rather than reform and amend their vicious lives, make God an honourable amends and compensation for them in some other way.

This hath been the way and folly of mankind in all ages, to defeat the great end and design of religion, and to thrust it by, by substituting something else in the place of it, which they hope may serve the turn as well, and which hath the appearance

pearance of as much devotion and respect, and perhaps of more cost and pains, than that which God requires of them. Men have ever been apt thus to impose upon themselves, and to please themselves with a conceit of pleasing God full as well, or better, by some other way, than that which he hath pitched upon and appointed for them; not considering that *God is a great King*, and will be observed and obeyed by his creatures in his own way; and that obedience to what he commands is better and more acceptable to him, than any other sacrifice that we can offer, which he hath not required at our hands; that he is infinitely wise and good, and therefore the laws and rules, which he has given us to live by, are more likely and certain means of our happiness, than any inventions and devices of our own.

Thus, I say, it hath been in all ages. The old world, after that general deluge which God sent to punish the raging wickedness and impiety of men, by sweeping all mankind from off the face of the earth, excepting only one family, which was saved to be the seminary of a new and better race of men; I say, after this, the world in a short space fell off from the worship of the true God to the worship of idols and false gods; being unwilling to bring themselves to a conformity and likeness to the true God, they chose false gods like themselves, such as might not only excuse, but even countenance and abet their lewd and vicious practices.

And when God had made a new revelation of himself to the nation of the *Jews*, and given them the chief heads and substance of the natural law written over again with his own finger in tables of stone, and many other laws concerning religious worship, and their civil conversation, suited and adapted to their present temper and condition; yet how soon did their religion degenerate into external observances, purifications and washings, and a multitude of sacrifices, without any great regard to the inward and substantial parts of religion, and the practice of those moral duties and virtues, which were in the first place required of them, and without which all the rest found no acceptance with God. Hence are those frequent complaints in the prophets, that their religion was degenerated into form and ceremony, into oblations and sacrifices, the observance of fasts, and sabbaths, and new moons; but had no power and efficacy upon their hearts and lives; was wholly destitute of inward purity and holiness, of all substantial virtues, and the fruits of righteousness in a good life. Thus God complains by the prophet *Isaiah*, chap. i. 11. &c. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me; saith the Lord? Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, &c.* Upon these terms God declares himself ready to be reconciled to them, and to have mercy on them. But all their external services and sacrifices, separated from real goodness and righteousness, were so far from appeasing God's wrath, that they did but increase the provocation. And to the same purpose, Chap. lvi. 2, 3. *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighted in their abomination.* Jer. vi. 19, 20. *Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba? and the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me. They thought to please God with costly incense and sacrifices, whilst they rejected his law.* And chap. vii. 4, 5, 6. *Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways, and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place.* And ver. 8, 9, 10. *Behold,*

10. Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, we are delivered to do all these abominations? This was to add impudence to all their other impieties, to think that the worship of God, and his holy temple did excuse these gross crimes and immoralities. Micah vi. 6, 7, 8. There God represents the Jews, as desirous to please God at any rate, provided their lusts and vices might be spared, and they might not be obliged to amend and reform their lives? *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* All this they would willingly do: but all this will not do without real virtue and goodness. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

And in the time of our blessed Saviour, those who pretended to be most devout among the Jews, were wholly busied about their pretended traditions of *washing of hands, and the outsides of their cups and dishes*, and about the external and lesser things of the law, the *tything of mint, and annise, and cumin*, and all manner of herbs, omitting in the mean time the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, and the love of God, as our Saviour describes their religion, *Matth. xxiii. 23.*

And after the clear revelation of the gospel, the best and most perfect institution that ever was, in the very beginning of christianity, what licentious doctrines did there creep in, *turning the grace of God into lasciviousness*, and releasing men from all moral duties, and the virtues of a good life? *by reason whereof the way of truth was evil spoken of*, as St. Peter and St. Jude expressly tell us concerning the sect of the *Gnosticks*. And St. John likewise describes the same sect by their arrogant pretences to extraordinary knowledge and illumination, whilst they *walked in darkness*, and allowed themselves in all manner of wickedness of life; they pretended to perfection and righteousness, without keeping the commandments of God.

And in the next following age of christianity, how was it pestered with a trifling controversy about the time of the observation of *Easter*, and with endless disputes and niceties about the doctrine of the Trinity, and the two natures and wills of Christ! by which means the practice of christianity was greatly neglected, and the main end and design of that excellent religion almost quite defeated and lost.

After this, when *the mystery of iniquity* began to shew itself, in the degeneracy of the *Roman* church from her primitive sanctity and purity, and in the affectation of an undue and boundless power over other churches, the christian religion began to be over-run with superstition, and the primitive fervour of piety and devotion was turned into a fierce zeal and contention about matters of no moment and importance; of which we have a most remarkable instance here in our own nation, when *Austin* the monk arrived here to convert the nation, and preach the gospel amongst us, as the church of *Rome* pretended; but against all faith and truth of history, which assures us that christianity was planted here among the *Britains* several ages before, and perhaps sooner than even at *Rome* itself; and not only so, but had got considerable footing among the *Saxons* before *Austin* the monk ever set foot amongst us; I say, when *Austin* the monk arrived here, the two great points of his christianity were to bring the *Britains* to a conformity with the church of *Rome* in the time of *Easter*, and in the tonsure and shaving of the priests, after the manner of St. Peter, as they pretended, upon the crown of the head, and not of St. Paul, which was by shaving or cutting close the hair of the whole head, as from some vain and foolish tradition he pretended to have learned: the promoting of these two customs was his great errand and business, and the zeal of his preaching was spent upon these two fundamental points; in which, after very barbarous and bloody doings, he at last prevailed. And this is *the conversion of England*, so much boasted of by the church of *Rome*, and for which

which this *Austin* is magnified for so great a saint; when it is very evident from the history of those times, that he was a proud, ignorant, turbulent, and cruel man, who instead of first converting the nation to the faith of Christ, confounded the purity and simplicity of the christian religion, which had been planted and established among us long before.

In latter ages, when the *man of sin* was grown up to his full stature, the great business of religion was the pope's absolute and universal authority over all christians, even kings and princes, *in order to spiritual matters*; ecclesiastical liberties and immunities; and the exemption of the clergy, and all matters belonging to them, from the cognizance of the secular power, the great points which *Thos. a Becket* contended so earnestly for, calling it *the cause of Christ*, and in the maintenance whereof he persisted to the death, and was canonized as a saint and a martyr. And among the people, their piety consisted in the promoting of monkery, and founding and endowing monasteries; in infinite superstitions, foolish doctrines, and more absurd miracles to confirm them; in purchasing indulgences with money, and hearing of masses for the redemption of souls out of purgatory; in the idolatrous worship of saints and their relicks and images, and especially of the blessed Virgin, which at last grew to that height, as to make up the greatest part of their worship and devotion both publick and private. And indeed they have brought matters to that absurd pass, that one may truly say, that the whole business of their devotion is to teach men to worship images, and images to worship God. For to be present at divine service and prayers celebrated in an unknown tongue, is not the worship of men and reasonable creatures, but of statues and images, which though they be present in the place where this service is performed, yet they bear no part in it, being void of all sense and understanding of what is done. And indeed in their whole religion, such as it is, they drive so strict a bargain with God, and treat him in so arrogant a manner by their insolent doctrine of the merit of good works, as if God were as much beholden to them for their service and obedience, as they are to him for the reward of it, which they challenge as of right and justice belonging to them. Nay, so high have they carried this doctrine, as to pretend not only to merit eternal life for themselves, but to do a great deal more in works of supererogation, for the benefit and advantage of others; that is, when they have done as much as in strict duty they are obliged to, and thereby paid down a valuable consideration for heaven, and as much as in equal justice between God and man it is worth, the surplussage of their good works they put as a debt upon God, as so many bills of credit laid up in the treasury of the Church, which the pope by his pardons and indulgences may dispense and place to whose account he pleaseth. And thus by one device or other they have enervated the christian religion to that degree, that it hath quite lost its virtue and efficacy upon the hearts and lives of men, and instead of the fruits of real goodness and righteousness, it produceth little else but superstition and folly; or if it bring forth any fruits of charity, it is either so misplaced upon chimera's (as hiring of priests to say so many masses for the dead, to redeem their souls out of purgatory) that it signifies nothing; or else the virtue of it is spoiled by the arrogant pretence of meriting by it. So apt have men always been to deceive themselves by an affected mistake of any thing for religion, but that which really and in truth is so. And this is that which the apostle *St. Paul* foretold would be the great miscarriage of *the last times*, that under a great pretence of religion men should be destitute of all goodness, and abandoned to all wickedness and vice, *having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it*, 2 Tim. iii. 5.

And though things have been much better since that happy reformation from the corruptions and errors of popery, yet even among protestants the malice and craft of the devil hath prevailed so far, as to undermine, in a great measure, the necessity of a good life, by those luscious doctrines of the *Antinomians*, concerning free grace, and the justification of a sinner merely upon a confident persuasion of his being in a state of grace and favour with God, and consequently that the gospel dischargeth men from obedience to the laws of God, and all manner of obligation to the virtues of a good life; which doctrines, how false and absurd soever in themselves, and pernicious in their consequences, did not only prevail very much

much in *Germany*, a little after the beginning of the reformation, but have since got too much footing in other places, and been too far entertained and cherished by some good men, who were not sufficiently aware of the error and danger of them. But blessed be God, the doctrine of our church, both in the *articles* and *homilies* of it, hath been preserved pure and free from all error and corruption in this matter on either hand, asserting the necessity of good works, and yet renouncing the merit of them in that arrogant sense in which the church of *Rome* does teach and assert it; and so teaching justification by faith, and the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, as to maintain the indispensable necessity of the virtues of a good life.

And thus I have done with the *first* reason, why it is so fit and necessary to press frequently upon christians the indispensable necessity of the virtues of a good life, *viz.* because men are and ever have been so very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and so hardly brought to that wherein religion mainly consists, *viz.* the practice of real goodness. I shall be brief upon the

II. Reason, namely, because of the indispensable necessity of the thing to render us capable of the divine favour and acceptance, and of the reward of eternal life. And this added to the former, makes the reason full and strong. For if men be so apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and to be deceived in it be a matter of such dangerous consequence, then it is highly necessary to inculcate this frequently upon christians, that no man may be mistaken in a matter of so much danger, and upon which his eternal happiness depends. Now if obedience to the laws of God, and the practice of virtue and good works be necessary to our continuance in a state of grace and favour with God, and to our final justification by our absolution at the great day, if nothing but holiness and obedience can qualify us for the blessed sight of God, and the glorious reward of eternal happiness; then it is matter of infinite consequence to us, not to be mistaken in a matter of so great importance; but that we *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, and *give all diligence to make our calling and election sure*, by adding to our faith and knowledge, the virtues of a good life; that by patient continuance in well-doing, we seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, and eternal life; and that we so demean ourselves in all holy conversation and godliness, as that we may with comfort and confidence wait for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. That this is indispensibly necessary to our happiness, I have in my former discourse shewn at large, from the great end and design of religion in general, and of the christian religion in particular, from the whole design and doctrine of the gospel, from the constant tenour of the bible, and from the nature and reason of the thing.

I know it hath been the great design of the Devil and his instruments, in all ages, to undermine religion, by making an unhappy separation and divorce between godliness and morality, between faith and the virtues of a good life; and by this means not only to weaken and abate, but even wholly to destroy the force and efficacy of the christian religion, and to leave men as much under the power of the Devil and their lusts, as if there were no such thing as christianity in the world. But let us not deceive ourselves; this was always religion, and the condition of our acceptance with God, to endeavour to be like God in purity and holiness, in justice and righteousness, in mercy and goodness, *to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well*. And this you will find to be the constant doctrine of the holy scriptures, from the beginning of the bible to the end. *Gen. iv. 7. If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?* *Psal. xv. 1, 2. Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell upon thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth from his heart.* *Psal. l. 23. To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.* *Isa. i. 16, 17, 18. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. *Isa. iii. 10, 11. Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him,* *Mich.*

vi. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

And our blessed Saviour in his sermon upon the mount, tells us plainly what manner of persons we must be, if ever we hope to be happy, and to enter into the kingdom of God; and wherein his religion consists, in righteousness, and purity, and meekness, and patience, and peaceableness; and declares most expressly, that if we hope for happiness upon any other terms than the practice of these virtues, we *build upon the sand*. Acts x. 34. *Of a truth I perceive, says St. Peter there, that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* Gal. vi. 7, 8. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.* Eph. v. 6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.* 1 John iii. 7. *Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous.* And here in the text, *this is a faithful saying, &c. These things are good and profitable to men*, acceptable to God, and honourable to religion, and the only way and means to eternal life, through the mercy and merits of *Jesus Christ*, our blessed Lord, and Saviour.

S E R M O N CLV.

Of the Necessity of Good Works.

TIT. iii. 8.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

*The third
Sermon on
this Text.*

I come now to the *second* thing I proposed, which was to answer an objection or two, to which the preaching of this kind of doctrine may seem liable.

First, That this is to advance and set up morality.

Secondly, that this seems to contradict St. Paul's doctrine of *justification by the free grace of God in Jesus Christ*, and by *faith without the works of the law*. I shall endeavour to answer both these.

First, that this is to advance and set up morality. To which I answer *two* things.

I. That if by morality men mean counterfeit virtue, and the specious shew of justice and charity, and meekness, or any other virtue, without the truth and reality of them, without an inward principle of love to God and goodness, out of ostentation and vain-glory, or for some other bye and sinister end, such as probably were the virtues of many heathens, and it is to be feared of too many christians; if this be that which the objectors mean by morality, then we do assure them that we preach up no such morality, but those virtues only which are sincere and substantial and real, the principle and root whereof, is the love of God and goodness, and the end, the honour and glory of God, and a necessary ingredient whereof is sincerity and truth. It is *righteousness and true holiness*, the sincere love of God and our neighbour, real meekness, and patience, and humility, and sobriety, and chastity, and not the glittering shew and appearance, the vain and affected ostentation of any of these virtues, which we persuade and press men so earnestly to endeavour after.

Not

Not that I believe that all virtues of the heathen were counterfeit and destitute of an inward principle of goodness; God forbid that we should pass so hard a judgment upon those excellent men, *Socrates*, and *Epictetus*, and *Antoninus*, and several others, who sincerely endeavoured to live up to the light and law of nature, and took so much pains to cultivate and raise their minds, to govern and subdue the irregularity of their sensual appetites and brutish passions, to purify and refine their manners, and to excel in all virtue and goodness. These were glorious lights in those dark times, and so much the better for being good under so many disadvantages, as the ignorance and prejudice of their education, the multitude of evil examples continually in their view, and the powerful temptation of the contrary customs and fashions of the generality of mankind.

Nor were they wholly destitute of an inward principle of goodness; for though they had not that powerful grace and assistance of God's Holy Spirit which is promised and afforded to all sincere christians (as neither had the *Jews*, who were the peculiar people of God, and in covenant with him) yet it is very credible, that such persons were under a special care and providence of God, and not wholly destitute of divine assistance, no more than *Job* and his friends, mentioned in the old testament, and *Cornelius* in the new; who surely were very good men, and accepted of God, though they were *Gentiles*, and *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, and *strangers from the covenant of promise*: but yet not excluded from the blessing of the *Messias*, tho' they were ignorant of him, as many of the *Jews* likewise were, nor from the benefit of that great propitiation, which in the *fulness of time* he was to make for the sins of the whole world.

So that there is no need so uncharitably to conclude (as some of the ancients have done, not all, nor the most ancient of them neither) that there were no good men among the heathen, and that the brightest of their virtues were counterfeit, and only in shew and appearance. For there might be several good men among the *Gentiles*, in the same condition that *Cornelius* was before he became a christian; of whom it is said, whilst he was yet a *Gentile*, that *he was a devout man, and feared God, and that his prayer and his alms were accepted of God*; a certain sign that they were not counterfeit. And if he had died in that condition, before Christ had been revealed to him, I do not see what reasonable cause of doubt there can be concerning his salvation; and yet it is a most certain and inviolable truth, *that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus*; *neither is there salvation in any other*. And good men in all ages and nations from the beginning of the world, both before the law, and under the law, and without the law, such as *feared God, and wrought righteousness*, were accepted of him *in that name*, and by the meritorious sacrifice of *that Lamb of God*, which in respect of the virtue and efficacy of it, is said to have been *slain from the foundation of the world*.

II. But if by moral virtues be meant those which concern the manners of men, from whence they seem to have taken their name, and which are in truth the duties commanded and enjoined by the natural or moral law, and are comprehended under those two great commands, (as our blessed Saviour calls them) *the love of God, and our neighbour*; I say, if this be the meaning of it, then we do advance this kind of morality, as that which is the primary and substantial part of all religion, and most strictly enjoined by the christian. To which purpose our Saviour tells us, *Mat. v. 17. that he was not come to destroy the law, and the prophets, but to fulfil them. And ver. 19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, and teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*; that is, under the dispensation of the gospel. So that this is a principal part of the christian religion, to teach and practise the duties of the moral law. This the *Pharisees* were defective in, placing their religion in external and little things, but neglecting the great duties of morality, *the weightier matters of the law, mercy, and judgment, and fidelity, and the love of God*. And therefore he adds, *ver. 20. I say unto you, except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*. It is not possible in more express and emphatical words to enjoin the ob-

servation of the duties of the moral law. And then for that great principle and rule of moral justice, *To do to all men, as we would have them to do to us*; our Saviour enjoins it as an essential part of religion, and the sum and substance of our whole duty to our neighbour, and of all the particular precepts contained in the law and the prophets. *Mat. vii. 12. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.* And St. Paul most expressly declares, that he was so far from weakening or making void the obligation of the law by his doctrine of justification by faith, that he did thereby confirm and establish it, *Rom. iii. 31. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.*

So that moral duties and virtues are the same with christian graces, and with that holiness and righteousness which the gospel requires, and differ only in name and notion. They are called *virtues*, with relation to the intrinsic nature and goodness of them; and *graces*, with respect to the principle from which they flow, being the fruits and effects of the gracious operation of the Spirit of God upon our minds. And it hath been a very ill service to religion, to decry morality, as some have done, not considering that moral duties are of primary obligation, and bound upon us by the law of nature; and that christianity hath reinforced and seconded the obligation of them by more powerful motives and encouragements. But I proceed to the

Second objection, viz. That this discourse seems to be contrary to St. Paul's doctrine of justification by the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, by faith, without the works of the law.

To which I answer, That St. Paul, when he does so vehemently and frequently assert justification by the free grace of God, and by faith, without the works of the law, does not thereby exclude the necessity of works of righteousness, and obedience to the moral precepts of the gospel, as the condition of our continuance in the favour of God, and of our final and perfect justification and absolution by the sentence of the great day; but on the contrary, does every where declare the necessity of a holy and virtuous life to this purpose. And this is most plainly the tenour and current of his doctrine throughout all his epistles. But whenever he contends that we are justified by faith without works, he denies one of these three things:

1. That the observance of the law of Moses is necessary to our justification and salvation. And this he does in opposition to those who troubled the christian church, by teaching that it was still necessary to christians to keep the law of Moses; and that unless they did so, they could not be saved; of which we have a full account given, *Acts xv.* And this for the most part is the meaning of that assertion, so frequent in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, that *we are not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ.* And this is very evident from the tenour of his reasoning about this matter, in which he does so frequently urge this argument, and insist so strongly upon it, *viz.* That men were justified before the law of Moses was given, for which he instances in Abraham, and therefore the observance of that law cannot be necessary to a man's justification and salvation.

2. Sometimes he, in his discourse upon this argument, denies the merit of any works of obedience and righteousness to gain the favour and acceptance of God; so that we cannot challenge any thing of God as of debt, and as a ground of boasting, but we owe all to the free grace and mercy of God; and when we have done our best, have done but our duty. And this he likewise frequently insists upon in his epistle to the Romans, in opposition to an arrogant opinion, common among the Jews, of the merit of good works, and that God was indebted to them for their obedience. In this sense he says, *Rom. iv. 4. Now to him that worketh is the reward reckoned, not of grace but of debt*; that is, he that claims justification, and the reward of eternal life, as due to him for his obedience, does not ascribe it to the free grace of God, but challengeth it as a debt due to him.

3. Sometimes he denies the necessity of any works of righteousness, antecedently to our first justification, and being received into a state of grace and favour with God; and asserts on the contrary, that by the faith of Christ, and sincerely embracing the christian religion, men are justified: and though they were never so great

great sinners before, all their past sins are forgiven, and God is perfectly reconciled to them. In which sense he says, *Chap. iv. 5. That God justifies the ungodly upon their believing.* So that whatever sins they were guilty of before, and though they never did any one good action in their lives, yet if they sincerely embrace the christian religion, and thereby engage themselves to reform their lives, and to obey the precepts of the gospel for the future, God will thereupon receive them into his favour, and pardon the sins of their former lives. And in this epistle to *Titus, Chap. iii. 5, 7.* immediately before the text, *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost: that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;* that is, though their former life had been very bad, (as he describes it before, *ver. 3. For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice, and envy, and hatred of one another.*) I say, notwithstanding this, though they had done no works of righteousness, but on the contrary, yet upon their solemn profession of christianity at their baptism, and declaration of their repentance, and engagements to live better, they were *justified freely by God's grace, and saved by his mercy.* But then he does not say, that after this solemn profession of christianity, works of righteousness were not necessary, to continue them in this state of grace and favour with God, but quite contrary, he plainly declares the necessity of them in the very next words; *This is a faithful saying, &c.*

And the consideration of this will fully reconcile the seeming difference between *St. Paul* and *St. James*, in this matter of justification. *St. Paul* affirms, that a sinner is at first justified, and received into the favour of God, by a sincere profession of the christian faith, without any works of righteousness preceding. *St. James* affirms that no man continues in a justified state, and in favour with God, whose faith doth not bring forth good works, and that it is not a true and lively faith, which doth not approve and shew itself to be so, by the works of obedience and a good life. *James ii. 14. What doth it profit a man, my brethren, if a man say that he hath faith, and hath not works; can faith save him? And ver. 17. Faith if it have not works is dead, being alone. And ver. 20. he repeats it again, Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead. And ver. 22. speaking of Abraham, Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect. And ver. 26. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* The sum and result of all which is this, that though we be justified at first by faith without works preceding, yet faith without good works following it will not finally justify and save us; nay indeed, that faith which does not bring forth the fruits of a good life, was never a true, and living, and perfect faith; but pretended, and dead, and imperfect, and therefore can justify no man; and he that hath only such a faith does but make an empty and ineffectual profession, but is really destitute of the true faith of the gospel.

And this is agreeable to that explication which was given by our first reformers here in *England*, of the nature of *justifying faith*. "That it is not a mere persuasion of the truths of natural and revealed religion, but such a belief as begets a submission to the will of God, and hath hope, love, and obedience to God's commandments joined to it. That this is the faith which in baptism is professed, from which christians are called *the faithful*; and that in those scriptures, where it is said, *we are justified by faith*, we may not think that we be justified by faith, as it is a separate virtue, from hope and charity, the fear of God and repentance; but by it is meant faith, neither only nor alone, but with the foresaid virtues, containing an engagement of obedience to the whole doctrine and religion of Christ. And that although all that are justified, must of necessity have charity, as well as faith, yet neither faith nor charity are the worthiness and merit of our justification, but that is to be ascribed only to our Saviour Christ, who was offered upon the cross for our sins, and rose again for our justification;" as may be seen more at large in a treatise published at the beginning of our Reformation, upon this and some other points. And I do not see what can be said upon this point with more clearness and weight.

All the application I shall make of this discourse, shall be briefly this; That if we be convinced of the necessity of the virtues of a good life to all that profess themselves christians, we would seriously and in good earnest set about the practice of them: if *this be a faithful saying*, then I am sure it greatly concerns us to be careful of our lives and actions, and that *our conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ*; because if this be true, there is no possible way to reconcile a wicked life, no, nor a wilful neglect and violation of any of the duties and laws of christianity, with the hopes of heaven and eternal life. In this the scripture is positive and peremptory, that *every man that hath this hope in him, must purify himself, even as he is pure*; that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*: But if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end shall be everlasting life.

And here I might particularly recommend to your careful practice, the great virtues of christianity; those which St. Paul tells us are the proper and genuine fruits of the spirit of Christ, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance. But I have not time to insist particularly upon them. I shall content myself briefly to mention those duties, which the apostle in this epistle doth more especially press upon the several conditions and relations of men. Those who are teachers and instructors of others, that they would not only be careful to preach sound doctrine, but in all things to shew themselves patterns of good works. Those who are subject to others, and under their government, that they would pay all duty and obedience to their superiors, as children to their parents, servants to their masters, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, as the apostle speaks, Chap. ii. ver. 10. And so likewise those who are subjects, that they live in all peaceable and humble obedience to princes and magistrates. This our apostle speaks of as a great duty of christian religion, and reckons it among good works; Chap. iii. 1. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates, and to be ready to every good work.

And then those who are of an inferior condition, that they labour and be diligent in the work of an honest calling, for this is privately good and profitable unto men, and to their families; and those who are above this necessity, and are in a better capacity to maintain good works, properly so called, works of piety, and charity, and justice; that they be careful to promote and advance them, according to their power and opportunity, because these things are publicly good and beneficial to mankind. And besides this, (as St. Peter exhorts, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, &c.) And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins; that is, doth not consider that the design of christianity is to renew and reform the hearts and lives of men. Wherefore he rather, brethren, as he goes on, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I will conclude all with that excellent saying of St. Paul in this epistle to Titus, which so fully declares to us the great design, and the proper efficacy of the christian doctrine upon the minds and manners of men; Chap. ii. 11, 12, 13. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world: Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all glory and honour now and for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N CLVI.

Of doing all to the Glory of God.

I C O R. x. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

THESE words are a general conclusion inferred from a particular case, which the apostle had been discoursing of before; and that we may the better understand the meaning of this general rule, it will not be amiss to look back a little upon the particular case the apostle was speaking of; and that was concerning *the partaking of things offered to idols*, and that in two cases; either by partaking of the idol-feasts in their temples, after the sacrifices; or by partaking of things offered to idols, whether they were bought by christians in the market, or set before them at a private entertainment, to which by some heathens they were invited.

The first he condemns as absolutely unlawful: the other not as unlawful in itself, but in some circumstances upon the account of scandal.

The first case he speaks of from ver. 14. to the 23. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, flee from idolatry. I speak to wise men: judge ye what I say.* As if he had said, you may easily apprehend what it is I am going to caution you against. And first he tells them in general, that they who communicated in the worship of any deity, or in any kind of sacrifice offered to him, did, in so doing, own and acknowledge that for a deity. To this purpose he instanceth in communicating in the christian sacrament, and in the *Jewish* sacrifices, ver. 16, 17, 18. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: (that is, the Jews) are not they which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar?* Thus it is in the Christian, and the *Jewish* worship. And the case is the same, if any man partake of the idol-feasts in their temples. This he does not express, but takes it for granted they understood what this discourse aimed at.

And then he answers an argument, which it seems was made use of by some, particularly the *Gnosticks*, of whom the apostle speaks, Chap. viii. and that was this. If an idol be nothing, and consequently things sacrificed to idols were not to be considered as sacrifices, then it was lawful to partake of the idol-feasts, which were celebrated in their temples. And that the apostle speaks of these, is plain from his discourse against the *Gnosticks*, who made use of this argument for the lawfulness of communicating at the idol-feasts, Chap. viii. 4. *As concerning therefore the eating of things which are offered in sacrifice unto idols; we know that an idol is nothing in the world, &c.* And ver. 10. *If any man see thee which hast knowledge* (alluding to the very name of *Gnosticks*) *if any man see thee which hast knowledge, sit at meat in an idol temple.*

This then is that partaking of idol-feasts, which the apostle here speaks of, which they pretended to be lawful, *because an idol is nothing.* This, says the apostle, I know as well as you, that an idol is no real deity, but for all that the Devil is really worshipped and served by this means, ver. 20. *But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils! ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils.*

Having

Having declared this way of partaking of things offered to idols to be unlawful in itself, and a virtual renouncing of christianity; then he proceeds to the consideration of the other case, of eating of things offered to idols out of their temples, which might happen several ways. Sometimes being sold by the priests, they were exposed to sale in the market. Sometimes the heathens carried some remainders of the sacrifices to their houses, and inviting the christians to a feast, might set these meats before them; what should christians do in either of these cases?

First, He determines in general, that out of the temples it was lawful to eat these things, because in so doing they communicated in no act of worship with the heathens; it is lawful, he says, in itself; but because it might be harmful to others, and give scandal, in such circumstances, it became unlawful by accident. *Ver. 23. All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.* Things which are lawful in themselves, may in some cases be very dangerous and destructive to others, and we should not only consider ourselves, but others also. *Let no man seek his own: but every man another's welfare.* And then he comes to the particular cases. *Whatever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.* We may take these things from God's hand, who is the true Lord of them and of all creatures. For this reason we may without scrupulous enquiry use those meats which are publickly exposed to sale.

And so likewise in the other case, if we be invited to the table of an heathen, we may eat what is set before us, without enquiring whether it be part of an idol-sacrifice. But if any man tells us, that this meat was offered in sacrifice to idols, in that case we ought to abstain from eating of it, *for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake*; that is, out of regard to the opinion of those, who think these meats unlawful: *for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.* Also in another sense, God hath made such abundant provision for us, that we may abstain from this or that meat without any great inconvenience. *Conscience, I say, not thine own but another's.* He had said before, we should eat of what was set before us, *asking no question for conscience sake*; that is, not making it a matter of conscience to ourselves: now he says, if we be told it was offered to an idol, we should not eat for conscience sake; that is, not as making a matter of conscience of it to ourselves, but out of regard to the conscience of another, to whom it might be a scandal. *For why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? and if I with thanksgiving be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?* that is, why should another man's conscience be a prejudice to my liberty? If another makes conscience of it as unlawful, why should his conscience govern mine, and make me think so too; or why should I be evil spoken of, for thinking it lawful to eat any thing set before me, for which I give thanks? This is a little obscure; but the plain meaning of the apostle's reasoning seems to be this, tho' I have that regard to another man's weak conscience, as to abstain from eating what he thinks unlawful; yet am I not therefore bound to be of his opinion, and think it unlawful in itself; I will consider his weakness so far as to forbear that which I am persuaded is lawful to do, but yet I will still preserve the liberty of my own judgment; and as I am content to give no scandal to him, so I expect that he should not censure and condemn me for thinking that lawful, which he believes not to be so: and then from all this discourse, the apostle establisheth this general rule in the text, *Wherefore whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* To which is parallel that other text, *1 Pet. iv. 11. That God in all things may be glorified.* So that this general rule lays a duty upon all christians of designing the glory of God in all their actions; all the difficulty is, what is here meant by this, of *doing all things to the glory of God.* The Jews have a common saying, which seems to be parallel with this phrase of the apostle, *That all things should be done in the name of God.* And this they make so essential to every good action, that it was a received principle among them, that he who obeys any command of God, and not in his name, shall receive no reward. Now that to do things in the name of God, and to do them to his glory, are but several phrases signifying the same thing, is evident from that precept of the Apostle, *Col. iii. 17. And whatsoever ye do in word, or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to his glory.* Now for our clear understanding of the sense of this phrase of glorifying

ifying God, or doing things to God's glory; we will consider the various use of it in scripture, and so descend to the proper and particular sense of it here in the text.

The glory of God is nothing else but the honour which is given to him by his creatures; and consequently, the general notion of *glorifying God, or doing any thing to his glory*, is to design to honour God by such and such actions; and this phrase is in scripture more especially applied to these following particulars.

I. We are said in scripture to glorify God by a solemn acknowledgment of him and his perfections, of his goodness and mercy, of his power and wisdom, of his truth and faithfulness, of his sovereign dominion and authority over us. Hence it is that all solemn actions of religion are called the worship of God, which is given to him by his creatures, signified by some outward expression of reverence and respect. Thus we are said to worship God, when we fall down before him, and pray to him for mercy and blessings, or praise him for favours and benefits received from him, or perform any other solemn act of religion, *Psal. lxxxvi. 9. All nations whom thou hast made, shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name.*

But especially the duty of praise and thanksgiving is most frequently in scripture called *glorifying of God, or giving glory to him*. *Psal. lxxxvi. 12. I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and will glorify thy name. Matt. v. 16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*; that is, praise him upon that account. *Luke v. 25. it is said of the man sick of the palsy, that when he was healed, He departed to his own house, glorifying God*; that is, praising God for his great mercy to him. And *Luke xvii. 18. our Saviour speaking of the ten lepers that were healed, says, that but one of them returned to give glory to God*; that is, to return thanks to God for his recovery.

II. Men are said in scripture to give glory to God by the acknowledgment of their sins, and repentance of them. *Josh. vii. 19. And Joshua said to Achan, my son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to him*. In like manner the prophet *Jeremiah* exhorting the people to repentance, useth this expression, *Jer. xiii. 16. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains*. And *Rev. xvi. 9. it is said, that those upon whom great plagues fell, repented not to give God glory*. We glorify God by confession of our sins and repentance, because in so doing we acknowledge his authority, and the holiness of those righteous laws which we have broken.

III. We are said likewise in scripture, to glorify God by our holiness and obedience. Thus we are commanded *to glorify God* by the chastity of our bodies, and the purity of our minds, *1 Cor. vi. 20. Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are his*. Thus our Saviour is said to have glorified God in the world, by his perfect obedience to his will, *John xvii. 4. Father, I have glorified thee upon earth*. And thus he tells us we may glorify God, by the fruits of holiness and obedience in our lives, *John xv. 8. Herein is my Father glorified, if ye bring forth much fruit*. So likewise *St. Paul* prays for the *Philippians*, that they may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by *Jesus Christ* unto the glory and praise of God.

IV. We are said likewise in an especial manner, *to glorify God* by our sufferings for his cause and truth. *John xxi. 19. our Saviour foretelling St. Peter's martyrdom, expresseth it by this phrase of glorifying God by his death, This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God*.

V. And lastly, And because religion is the solemn honour, and publick owning and acknowledgment of the Deity: hence it is that in scripture we are said *to glorify God* in a peculiar and eminent manner, when in all our actions we consult the honour and advantage of religion. Upon this account *St. Peter* exhorts the ministers of the gospel, so to preach to the people, and so to perform the publick offices of religion, as may be for the honour of religion; and this he calls glorifying of God, *1 Pet. iv. 11. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified*. And because the peace and unity of christians is so very much for the honour and advantage of religion, therefore we are said in

an especial manner to glorify God, by maintaining the peace and unity of the church, *Rom. xv. 5, 6.* Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And here in the text, we are said to do all things to the glory of God, when in all our actions we have a regard to the promoting and advancing of religion, and the edification of christians. For here by *eating and drinking to the glory of God*, the apostle plainly means, that when things offered to idols are set before us, we should refrain from them, when by our eating, the interest of religion, and the edification of christians may receive any prejudice, that is when our eating may be a scandal to others, that is, a *stumbling block*, or an *occasion of falling into sin*. And that this is the apostle's meaning, is evident from *ver. 23.* All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient, & πάντα συμφέρει, all things profit not; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not; that is, tho' I know it is a thing very lawful in itself, to eat things which have been offered to idols, if they be bought in the market, or accidentally set before me at a feast; yet in some circumstances it may not be for the advantage of religion, and be so far from edifying, that it may be an occasion of sin to them. For instance, I am invited to a feast, where things offered to idols are set before me, and one says, *this was offered in sacrifice unto idols*, a sufficient intimation to me, that he thinks it unlawful; and therefore I will forbear, because of the inconvenience to religion, and the manifold scandal that might follow upon it, by hindering others from embracing religion; or by tempting weak christians, either to the doing of a thing against their conscience, or to apostatize from religion. In this case, he that abstains from these meats, and contents himself with others, *eats to the glory of God*.

And that this is the true notion of scandal or offence, not barely to grieve others, or do things displeasing to them, but to do such things as are really hurtful to others, and may be a prejudice or hinderance to their salvation, and an occasion of their falling into sin: I say, that this is the true and proper notion of scandal is evident from what follows immediately after the text; *Give none offence to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God; as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Give no offence to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God;* the apostle intimates that such an action as this we are speaking of, might be an occasion of sin to all these, and a hinderance of their salvation: it might hinder the Jew from turning christian, and harden him in his infidelity; for he might say, see how well you christians worship one God, when you can partake of things offered to idols: it might confirm the heathen in his superstition, and keep him from embracing christianity; for he might say surely, why should the christians persuade me to forsake the worship of idols, when they themselves will knowingly eat things offered to them? It might tempt the weak christians either to sin against their consciences by following my example, or to apostatize from christianity upon this offence taken against it; therefore says the apostle, *do all things to the glory of God*; that is, for the honour and advantage of the christian religion, and the furtherance of mens salvation; for so says he, *I do in these, and all other actions of my life, I study the advantage of all men, in all things not regarding mine own convenience in comparison of the eternal salvation of others.*

And thus I have as briefly and clearly as I could explained this phrase to you, of *doing things to the glory of God*.

The result of all is, that we glorify God by doing our duty, by all actions of worship and obedience to God, and by our repentance in case of sin and disobedience, by doing and by suffering the will of God, more especially by using our christian liberty, as to things lawful in themselves, so as may make most for the honour and advantage of religion, for the unity and edification of the church, and the salvation of the souls of men, which is the proper notion here in the text, of *eating and drinking, and doing whatever we do, to the glory of God*.

From all this discourse it will be evident, that three things must concur, that our actions may be said to be done to the glory of God.

1. Our actions must be materially good; we must do what God commands, and abstain from doing what he hath forbidden. Sin is in its nature a dishonour to God,

God, a contradiction to his nature, and a contempt of his authority and laws; so that we cannot glorify God by transgressing our duty.

2. Our actions must not only be good, but they must be done with regard to God, and out of conscience to our duty to him, and in hopes of the reward which he hath promised, and not for any low, and mean, and temporal end. The best action in itself may be spoiled, and all the virtue of it blasted, by being done for a wrong end. If we serve God to please men, and be charitable out of vain-glory *to be seen of men*; if we profess godliness for gain, and are religious only to serve our temporal interest, though the actions we do be never so good, yet all the virtue and reward of them is lost, by the mean end and design which we aim at in the doing of them; because all this while we have no love or regard for God, and the authority of his laws; we make no conscience of our duty to him, we are not moved by the rewards of another world, which may lawfully work upon us, and prevail with us, but we are swayed by little temporal advantages, which if we could obtain as well by doing the contrary, we would as soon, nay perhaps much sooner, do it.

And this is so essentially necessary, that no action, though never so good, that is not done with regard to God, and upon some of the proper motives and considerations of religion, such as are the authority of God, conscience of our duty to him, love of him, faith in his promises, fear of his displeasure; I say, no action that is not done upon all, or some of these motives, can be said to be done *to the glory of God*. And this is the meaning of that saying among the *Jews*, which I mentioned before, *That he who obeys any command of God, but not in his name, shall receive no reward*. Moral actions receive their denomination of good or evil, as well from the end, as from the matter of them; and as the best end cannot sanctify an action bad in itself; so a bad end and design is enough to spoil the best action we can do; and as it is great impiety to do a wicked thing, though for a religious end, so it is great hypocrisy to be religious for mean and temporal ends.

3. That all our actions may be done *to the glory of God*, we must not only take care that they be lawful in themselves, but that they be not spoiled and vitiated by any bad circumstance; for circumstances alter moral actions, and may render that which is lawful in itself, unlawful in some cases: so that if we would *do all things to the glory of God*, we must in some cases refrain from doing that which is lawful in itself. As when such an action that I am about to do, may through the prejudice or mistake of men probably redound to the dishonour and disadvantage of religion, by causing factions and divisions, by hindering some from embracing the true religion, or making others apostatize from it, or by being any other way an occasion to men of falling into sin, or any impediment to their salvation; in these and the like cases, we are bound to have that consideration of religion, that regard to the peace and unity of the church, that tenderness and charity for the souls of men, as to deny ourselves the use of things otherwise lawful; and if we do not do it, we offend against a great rule both of piety and charity.

I shall only farther at present endeavour to give a brief resolution to *two* questions, much debated upon occasion of this rule of the apostle, of *doing all things to the glory of God*.

First, How far we are bound actually to intend and design the glory of God in every particular action of our lives. To this I answer.

1. That it is morally impossible that a man should do every particular action with actual and explicit thoughts and intentions of glorifying God thereby, and therefore there can be no obligation to any such thing.

2. It is not necessary, no more than for a man that takes a journey, every step of his way actually to think of his journey's end, and the place whither he intends to go; a constant resolution to go to such a place, and a due care not to go out of the way; and in case of any doubt, to inform ourselves as well as we can of the right way; and to keep in it, is as much consideration of the end of a man's journey, as is needful to bring him thither, and more than this would be troublesome and to no purpose; the case is the very same in the course of a man's life. From whence it follows in the

3. Place, That an habitual and settled intention of mind, to glorify God in the course of our lives, is sufficient; because this will serve all good purposes, as well as an actual intention upon every particular occasion. He that doth things with regard to God, and out of conscience of his duty to him, and upon the proper motives and considerations of religion, in obedience and love to God, in hopes of his reward, and out of fear of his displeasure, glorifies God in his actions. And if this principle be but rooted and settled in his mind, it is sufficient to govern his life, and is virtually, and to all purposes, as true and constant an intention of glorifying God, as if we did actually and explicitly propound this end to ourselves in every particular action of our lives.

Secondly, Whether a man be bound to prefer the glory of God before his own eternal happiness, as *Moses* and *St. Paul* seem to have done; the one in being content to have his name blotted out of the book of life, the other to be anathema from *Christ*, for the salvation of *Israel*? To this I answer.

If we could admit the supposition, that the glory of God, and a man's eternal happiness might come in competition, there could be no obligation upon a man to chuse eternal misery upon any consideration whatsoever. The preference of one thing before another, supposeth them both to be objects of our choice; but the greatest evil known and apprehended to be so, cannot be the object of a reasonable choice; neither the greatest moral nor natural evil of sin, or misery. Sin is not to be chosen in any case, no not for the glory of God. The apostle makes the supposition, and answers it; that *if the truth and glory of God could be promoted by his lie*, yet we are *not to do evil that good may come*. Rom. iii. 7, 8.

Nor is the greatest natural evil the object of our choice. God himself hath planted a principle in our nature to the contrary, to seek our own happiness, and to avoid utter ruin and destruction; and then surely much more that which is much worse, as eternal misery is, whatever some learned men, in despite of nature and common sense, have asserted to the contrary, that it is better and more desirable to be extremely and eternally miserable, than not to be; for what is there desirable in being, when it serves to no other purpose but to be the foundation of endless and intolerable misery? And if this be a principle of our nature, can any man imagine that God should frame us so, as to make the first and fundamental principle of it directly opposite to our duty?

As to the instance of *Moses*, it does not reach this case; because the phrase of *blotting out of the book of life*, does in all probability signify no more than a *temporal death*. As to that of *St. Paul*, it is by no means to be taken in a strict sense, but as a vehement and hyperbolical expression of his mighty affection to his *brethren according to the flesh*, For whom, says he, *I could wish to be an anathema from Christ*. Besides the reason of the thing, the form of the expression shews the meaning of it, *I could wish*, that is, I would be content to do or suffer almost any thing for their salvation, insomuch that *I could wish*, if it were fit and lawful, and reasonable to make such a wish, *to be accursed from Christ for their sakes*. It is plainly a suspended form of speech, which declares nothing absolutely. But,

2. It is a vain and senseless supposition, that the glory of God, and our eternal happiness can stand in competition. By seeking the glory of God, we naturally and directly promote our own happiness; the glory of God and our happiness are inseparably linked together; we cannot glorify God by sin; and so gracious hath God been to us, that he hath made those things to be our duty, which naturally tend to our felicity; and we cannot glorify God more than by doing our duty, nor can we promote our own happiness more effectually than by the same way. From whence it plainly follows that the glory of God and our happiness, cannot reasonably be supposed to cross and contradict one another; and therefore the question is frivolous which supposeth they may come in competition. 1 Cor. xv. 58. the apostle exhorts christians to be *stedfast and unmoveable, and abundant in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*. And Tit. i. 1, 2. the apostle calls himself *A servant of Jesus Christ, in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised*. To serve God in hope of eternal life, is to glorify God; and therefore the glory of God and our eternal happiness are never to be opposed.

I shall briefly draw two or three inferences from this discourse, and so conclude.

I. See

I. See here the great goodness of God to mankind, who is pleased to esteem whatever is for the good of men, to be for the glory of God; and whatever tends to the eternal salvation of ourselves or others, to be a glorifying of himself.

II. We learn hence likewise, the excellency of the christian religion, which requires not only a conscientious care of ourselves, to do nothing but what is lawful; but likewise a charitable regard to others in the use of our liberty; in the doing or not doing of those things which we may lawfully do; after the securing of our own happiness by doing our duty, we are to consult the edification and salvation of others, in the charitable use of our liberty in those things which God hath left indifferent.

III. Here is a great argument to us to be very careful of our duty, and to abound in the fruits of holiness, because hereby we glorify God. *Herein is my father glorified*, says our Saviour, *if ye bring forth much fruit*; and the apostle tells us, that *the fruits of righteousness are to the praise and glory of God*. We having all from God, our very being, our souls and bodies, and the powers and faculties of both, and therefore we should give him the glory of his own gifts: our souls and bodies were not only made by him at first, but are likewise redeemed by him, and *bought with a price*, and therefore, as the apostle argues, *we should glorify him in our bodies, and in our souls, which are his*.

IV. And lastly, We should in all our actions have a particular regard to the honour and advantage of religion, the edification of our brethren, and the peace and unity of the church: because in these things we do in a peculiar manner glorify God. In vain do men pretend to seek the glory of God by faction and division, which do in their own nature so immediately tend to the dishonour and damage of religion. Next to the wicked lives of men, nothing is so great a disparagement and weakening to religion, as the divisions of christians; and therefore instead of employing our zeal about differences, we should be zealous for peace and unity, *that with one mind, and one mouth, we may glorify God even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

S E R M O N CLVII.

Doing Good, a Security against Injuries from Men.

I P E T. iii. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

THE apostle, in this and the former chapter, earnestly presseth christians to an holy and unblameable conversation, that the heathen might have no occasion, from the ill lives of christians, to reproach christianity; particularly he cautions them against that abuse of christian liberty, which it seems too many were guilty of, casting off obedience to their superiors under that pretence; telling them that nothing could be a greater scandal to their religion, nor raise a more just prejudice in the minds of men against it: and therefore he strictly chargeth them with the duty of obedience in their several relations; as of subjects to their governors,
of

of Servants to their masters, of wives to their husbands; and in short, to practise all those virtues, both among themselves, and towards others, which are apt to reconcile and gain the affections of men to them; to be charitable and compassionate, courteous and peaceable one towards another, and towards all men; not only to abstain from injury and provocation, but from revenge by word or deed; and instead thereof to bless and do good, and by all possible means to preserve and pursue peace. Ver. 8, 9. *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrarywise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

And to encourage them to the practice of these virtues, he tells them, that they could by no other means more effectually consult the safety and comfort of their lives, Ver. 10. *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.*

And this was the way to gain the favour of God, and engage his providence for our protection, Ver. 12. *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

And that this would also be the best way to reconcile men to us, and to gain their good will, and to prevent injuries and affronts from them, ver. 13. *And who is he that will harm you, &c.*

In these words we have, *First*, a qualification supposed, *If ye be followers of that which is good.*

Secondly, The benefit and advantage we may reasonably expect from it, viz. security from the ill usage and injuries of men. *Who is he that will harm you?*

First, The qualification supposed is, that we be followers of that which is good. But what is that? The apostle takes it for granted, that every body knows it, and he had given instances of it before. He does not go about to define or explain it, but appeals to every man's mind and conscience, to tell him what it is. It is not any thing that is disputed and controverted, which some men call good, and others evil; but that which all are agreed in, and which is universally approved and commended by heathens as well as christians, that which is substantially good, and that which is unquestionably so. It is not zeal for lesser things, about the ritual and ceremonial part of religion, and a great strictness about the external parts of it, and much nicety and scrupulousness about things of no moment, as the Pharisees *tything of mint, &c. about meats and drinks, and the observation of days, and the like*; but a pursuit of the weightier things of the law, a care of the great duties of religion, *mercy, and justice, and fidelity*; those things wherein the kingdom of God consists, *righteousness and peace*: such as these the apostle had instanced in, as substantial and unquestionable parts of goodness, things which admit of no dispute, but do approve themselves to the reason and conscience of all mankind; and the practice of these he calls *following of that which is good*.*

* See more
of this,
Vol. II.
Serm. 148.
p. 301.

Be ye followers of that which is good; the word is *μιμηται*, if ye imitate the good you see in others; in one copy the word is *ζηλωται*, If ye be zealous of that which is good. And this is not amiss. Zeal about lesser and disputable things is very unsuitable and misbecoming: but we cannot be too earnest and zealous in the pursuit of things which are substantially and unquestionably good; it is good, and will become us to be zealously affected about such things. Some things will not bear much zeal, and the more earnest we are about them, the less we recommend ourselves to the approbation of sober and considerate men. Great zeal about little and doubtful things, is an argument of a weak mind, infatuated by superstition, or over-heated by enthusiasm: but nothing more becomes a wise man, than the serious and earnest pursuit of those things which are agreed on all hands to be good, and have an universal approbation among all parties and professions of men, how wide soever their differences may be in other matters. This for the qualification supposed, *If ye be followers of that which is good.* I proceed to the

Second thing in the text, the benefit and advantage which may reasonably be expected from it, and that is, security from the ill usage and injuries of men. *Who is he that will harm you, &c.* The apostle doth not absolutely say, none will do

do it; but he speaks of it as a thing so very unreasonable, and upon all accounts so unlikely and improbable, that we may reasonably presume that it will not ordinarily and often happen. Not but that good men are liable to be affronted and persecuted, and no man's virtues, how bright and unblemished soever, will at all times, and in all cases, exempt him from all manner of injury and ill treatment: but the *following of that which is good*; (as I have explained it) doth in its own nature tend to secure us from the malice and mischief of men, and very frequently does it, and, all things considered, is a much more effectual means to this end, than any other course we can take; and this the apostle means when he says, *Who is he that will harm you?*

And this will appear, whether we consider the nature of virtue and goodness; or the nature of man, even when it is very much depraved and corrupted; or the providence of God.

I. If we consider the nature of virtue and goodness, which is apt to gain upon the affections of men, and secretly to win their love and esteem. True goodness is inwardly esteemed by bad men, and many times had in very great esteem and admiration, even by those who are very far from the practice of it; it carries an awe and majesty with it; so that bad men are very often with-held and restrained from harming the good, by that secret and inward reverence which they bear to goodness.

There are several virtues, which are apt in their own nature to prevent injuries and affronts from others. Humility takes away all occasion of insolence from the proud and haughty, it baffles pride, and puts it out of countenance. Meekness pacifies wrath, and blunts the edge of injury and violence. Suffering good for evil is apt to allay and extinguish enmity, to subdue the roughest dispositions, and to conquer even malice itself. And there are other virtues which are apt in their own nature to oblige men, and gain their good-will, and make them our friends, and to tie their affections strongly to us; as courtesy and charity, kindness and compassion, and a readiness to do all good offices to all men; and the friendship and good-will of others, is a powerful defence against injuries. Every man will cry shame of those who shall fall foul upon him that hurts no body. He that obliged many, shall have many to take his part when he is assaulted, to rise up in his defence and rescue, and to interpose between him and danger. *For a good man, says the apostle, some would even dare to die.*

Besides, it is very considerable, that none of these virtues expose men to any danger and trouble from human laws. When christianity was persecuted, because it differed from, and opposed the received religion and superstition of the world, it was commonly acknowledged by the heathen (as *Tertullian* tells us) that *the christians were very good men in all other things, saving that they were christians*. When the laws were most severe against christians for their meetings, which they called seditious, and for their refusal to comply with the received superstition of the world, which they called contempt of the Gods, yet there were all this while no laws made against modesty, and humility, and meekness, and kindness, and charity, and peaceableness, and forgiveness of injuries. These virtues are in their nature of so unalterable goodness, that they could not possibly be made matter of accusation; no government ever had the face to make laws against them. And this the apostle takes notice of as a singular commendation, and great testimony to the immutable goodness of these things, that in the experience of all ages and nations, there was never any such inconvenience found in any of them, as to give occasion to a law against them, *Gal. v. 22, 23. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, fidelity, meekness, temperance. Against such things there is no law.* So that goodness from its own nature hath this security, that it brings men under the danger of no law.

II. If we consider the nature of man, even when it is very much depraved and corrupted. There is something that is apt to restrain bad men from injuring those that are remarkably good; a reverence for goodness and the inward convictions of their own mind, that those whom they are going about to injure, are better and more righteous than themselves; the fear of God, and of bringing down his vengeance upon their heads, by their ill treatment of his friends and followers; and
many

many times the fear of men, who though they be not good themselves, yet have an esteem for those that are so, and cannot endure to see them wronged and oppressed, especially if they have been obliged by them, and have found the real effects of their goodness in good offices done by them to themselves.

Besides that bad men are seldom bad for nought, without any cause given, without any manner of temptation and provocation to be so. Who will hurt a harmless man, and injure the innocent? For what cause, or for what end should he do it? He must love mischief for itself, that will do it to those who never offered him any occasion and provocation.

III. If we consider the providence of God, which is particularly concerned for the protection of innocency and goodness. *For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance will behold the upright.* This the apostle takes notice of, in the verse before the text, as the great security of good men against violence and injury, *The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.* So that if bad men were never so ill-disposed toward the good, and bent to do them all the injury and mischief they could devise, the providence of God hath a thousand ways to prevent it; and if he pleases to interpose between them and danger, who can harm them if they would? He can *snare the wicked in the works of their own hands*, and make *the mischief which they devised against good men, to return upon their own heads*; he can weaken their hands and infatuate their counsels, so that they shall not be able to bring their wicked enterprizes to pass; he can change their hearts, and turn the fierceness and rage of men against us, into a fit of love and kindness, as he did the heart of *Esau* towards his brother *Jacob*; and their bitterest enmity against truth and goodness, into a mighty zeal for it, as he did in *St. Paul*, who when he came to *Damascus*, fell *preaching up that way*, which he came thither on purpose to persecute. And this God hath promised to do for good men who are careful to please him. *When a man's ways please the Lord, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him.*

So that considering the nature of goodness, and the nature of man, and the providence of God, *Who is like to harm us, if we be followers of that which is good?* None can reasonably do it, and he must be a very bad man that can find in his heart to do it, when there is no cause, no temptation or provocation to it; and the providence of God, *who hath the hearts of men in his hands, and can sway and incline them as he pleaseth*, is particularly concerned to preserve good men from harm and mischief.

And yet we are not to understand this saying of the apostle, as declaring to us the constant and certain event of things, without any exception to the contrary. For good men to appearance, nay those that are really so, and the very best of men, are sometimes exposed to great injuries and sufferings; of which I shall give you an account in these following particulars.

I. Some that seem to be good, are not sincerely so; and when they, by the just judgment of God, are punished for their hypocrisy, in the opinion of many, goodness seems to suffer. Some under a great profession and colour of religion, have done very bad things, and when they justly suffer for great crimes, they call punishment persecution, and the party and church which they are of, call them saints and martyrs.

II. Some that are really good, are very imperfectly so, have many flaws and defects, which do very much blemish and obscure their goodness; they are *followers of that which is good*, but they have an equal zeal for things which have no goodness in them, or so little that it is not worth all that stir and bustle which they make about them; and will contend as earnestly for a doubtful, and it may be for a false opinion, as for the articles of the *creed*, and for *the faith which was once delivered to the saints*; and will oppose a little ceremony with as much heat as the greatest immorality. In these cases, it is not mens goodness which raiseth enmity against them, but their imprudent zeal and other infirmities which attend it: but however, bad men are glad to lay hold of these occasions and pretences of enmity, which their indiscretion offers. Good men may be, and frequently are mistaken in their opinions and apprehensions of things; but it is a great mistake to have an equal zeal for little and doubtful things, as for the great and indispensable

indispensible duties of the christian life, and yet many times so as to neglect those to a great degree; and men must blame themselves for the inconveniences that happen to them for their own indiscretion; for neither will the nature of the thing bear them out alike, nor will the providence of God be equally concerned to protect men in the following of that, which they through a gross mistake, and a heady conceit of their own knowledge in religion, think to be good, as in the following of that which is really and unquestionably good.

III. The enmity of some men against goodness is so violent and implacable, that no innocency, no excellency of goodness, how great soever, can restrain their malice towards good men, or hinder the effects of it, when it comes in their way, and they have power to do them mischief. Against these the providence of God is our best safe-guard, and it is wisdom, as much as is possible, to keep out of their way, and to pray with *St. Paul*, that we may be *delivered from wicked and unreasonable men*. Men of so absurd a malice against goodness, that it is not to be prevented by any innocency or prudence; and so implacable, that there is no way to gain and reconcile them, nor perhaps is it much desirable: their good word would be no credit to us, and their friendship would be pernicious when it cannot be had upon other terms than of conniving at their faults, and being concerned in their quarrels, and at last quarrelling and breaking with them, unless we will *run with them to the same excess of riot*. The friendship of such men is more terrible than their enmity, and their malice much less to be dreaded than their kindness.

IV. The last and chief exception is that of the cross, when the sufferings and persecutions of good men are necessary for the great ends of God's glory, for the advancement of religion, and the example and salvation of others. And with this exception all the declarations of scripture concerning the temporal prosperity and safety of good men, and all the promises of the new testament are to be understood. And this exception our Saviour himself expressly makes, *Mark x. 29, 30. Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life*; that is, so far as a state of persecution would admit, all these losses should be recompensed to them in this present time; as they were to the apostles in a remarkable manner: when they who had but little to part with for the gospel, had the estates of christians laid at their feet and committed to their disposal, for the noblest purposes of charity, and common support of christians, which was as much to them, as if they had been masters of the greatest estates; and whatever was wanting to any of them in the accomplishment of this promise, was abundantly made up to them in the unspeakable and eternal happiness of the world to come. And this exception the apostle *St. Peter* is careful to mention expressly, immediately after the text; for after he had said, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* he immediately adds, *But, and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; that is, in this case, fear God more than men, and be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you; that is, if ye be questioned for being christians, be ready to own your profession, and to give a reason of it: so that the apostle supposeth, that notwithstanding what he had said, that ordinarily it is not in the nature of men to persecute men for true goodness, yet they must not expect to be exempted from persecution, which was necessary for the establishment of the christian religion.*

In these cases God permits the Devil to instigate and exasperate evil men against those that are good, to act beyond their usual temper. Thus God, when he designed an illustrious example of patience for all ages of the world, he lets loose the Devil, not only to stir up his instruments the *Chaldeans* and *Sabeans* against *Job*, but to afflict him immediately himself with bodily pains and diseases. In these and the like cases, the best men are exposed to the greatest sufferings. Thus God permitted *Socrates*, that great light among the *Gentiles*, and the glory of philosophy, to be cruelly treated and put to death for an example of virtue, and a testimony against their impious and abominable idolatry. And thus likewise when it was necessary

for the common salvation of men, and to give the world an example beyond all exception of the greatest innocency, enduring the greatest indignities and sufferings with the greatest patience, that one should suffer for all mankind, he permitted the best man that ever was, God and goodness incarnate, *by wicked hands to be crucified and slain*; and afterwards when it was necessary for the propagation and establishment of christianity in the world, that the truth of it should be sealed by the death of so many martyrs, God was pleased to suffer the rage of bad men to break out into all manner of violence and cruelty.

But yet notwithstanding these exceptions, those who make it their business to do good, and to excel in those virtues which are apt to win and oblige mankind, may in ordinary cases and times expect great safety and protection against the injuries of the world, from an exemplary piety and innocency, and goodness; for, these sayings in the new testament, that *through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God*, and that *whoever will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution*, are not equally to be extended to all places and times; but more peculiarly to be understood of the first times of christianity, when the providence of God thought fit to establish the christian religion upon the innocent lives and patient sufferings of the first professors of it.

The result from all this discourse is, that we should not be weary of well-doing; but mind and follow the things which are substantially and unquestionably good; not doubting, but besides the infinite reward of it in the other world, it will ordinarily turn to our great security and advantage in this life, and save us harmless from a great many mischiefs and inconveniences which others are exposed to. If we endeavour to excel in those christian virtues which the apostle mentions before the text, and which he means by our being *followers of that which is good*; we shall undoubtedly find the comfort of it, in those temporal benefits that will redound to us: for the scripture hath not said in vain, *Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Glory, and honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good. That the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that work peace; that by well-doing we shall put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and that he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men.*

But if we mistake religion, and place it in those things wherein it doth not really consist, in airy notions and doubtful opinions, in superstitious conceits and practices, and in a fiery and furious zeal for things of no weight and substance, of no real virtue and goodness; if we be defective in the great virtues of meekness and humility, of peaceableness and charity, of kindness and courtesy, of forbearance and forgiveness, of *rendering good for evil, and overcoming evil with good*, qualities which will universally endear us and recommend us to the favour and protection of God, and to the esteem and good-will of men; and if instead of these we abound in malice and envy, be proud and conceited, censorious and uncharitable, contentious and unpeaceable, rude and uncivil, impatient and implacable; we must not think it strange, if we be ill-treated in this world, not for our goodness, but for our want of it; and we have no reason to wonder, if at every turn we meet with the inconveniences of our own heat and indiscretion, of our peevish and morose temper, of our factious and turbulent disposition. For this is an eternal rule of truth, *As we sow, so shall we reap*; every man shall be *filled with his own ways, and eat the fruit of his own doings*.

S E R M O N C L V I I I .

Of Diligence in our general and particular Calling.

E C C L . ix. 10.

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might : for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.

THESE words of the royal preacher are a general exhortation to diligence and industry, in that work which is most proper for us to do in this world. And I shall consider in them these *two* things. *Preach'd at White-hall, 1685.*

First, The matter of this advice and exhortation, and that is, that we would use great diligence about those things which are the proper work and employment of this life. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do*; that is, the work which is before thee, which is most proper for thee to propose to thyself, as the great end and design of thy life, the province and charge which is appointed thee. So that these words, in the full compass and extent of them, may very well comprehend every reasonable purpose and undertaking, whatever is incumbent upon us as a duty, and is matter of reasonable choice. *Do it with thy might*; that is, set about it, with great care, use all possible diligence and industry for the effecting and accomplishing of it.

Secondly, Here is the argument whereby the wise preacher doth inforce this counsel and exhortation; because this life is the proper season of activity and industry, of designing and doing those things which are in order to a future happiness; and when this life is at an end, there will be no farther opportunity of working, there will nothing then remain, but to reap the fruit, and to receive the just recompence of what we have done in this life; *For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest. In the grave, this the LXX render by the word αἴδης*, by which the Greeks used to express the state of the dead, the condition of separate souls of good or bad men after they are departed this life, and entered into another world. In which state, Solomon does not mean that departed souls have no knowledge and sense of any thing, but that then there will be no place for any counsel and design, for any activity and industry in order to our happiness: what we do to this purpose, we must do whilst we are in this world; it will be too late afterwards to think of altering or bettering our condition.

These are the *two* parts of the text, and they shall be the *two* heads of my following discourse; and God grant, that what shall be said upon them, may be effectual to persuade every one of us seriously to mind our great interest and concernment, and to apply ourselves with all our might to that which is our proper work and business in this world.

First, We will consider the matter of this counsel and exhortation, and that is, that we would use great diligence and industry about that which is our proper work and business in this life; and this may very probably comprehend in it these *two* things.

I. Diligence in our great work and business, that which equally concerns every man, I mean the business of religion, in order to the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls.

II. Diligence in our particular calling and charge, whatever it be.

VOL. III.

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I. Diligence

I. Diligence in our great and general work, that which equally concerns every man, the business of religion, in order to the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls; and this consists in these *two* things.

1. In a sincere care and endeavour of universal obedience to God, by the conformity of our lives and actions to his laws.

2. In case of sin and miscarriage, in a sincere repentance for our sins, and a timely care to be reconciled to God.

I. In a sincere care and endeavour of universal obedience to God, by the conformity of our lives and actions to his will and law. And this is a great work, and requires our greatest care and diligence to rectify our minds, to restrain our evil inclinations, to subdue and mortify our lusts, to correct the irregularity of our passions, to moderate and govern our appetites and affections, and to keep them within due and reasonable bounds, *to take heed to our ways, that we offend not with our tongue*, nor transgress our duty by word or deed; to serve God with true devotion of mind, both in publick and private; to attend upon the duties of his worship, and to perform all acts of piety and religion, with care and constancy, in the sincerity and uprightness of our hearts; to be meek and humble, peaceable and patient, chearful and contented with our condition; to be ready not only to forgive injuries, but to requite them with kindness and good turns, to do all offices of humanity and charity to all men, according to our ability and opportunity; to instruct the ignorant, and to reduce those that are in error to the knowledge of the truth, by wise counsel and good example; to endeavour *to turn men from the evil of their ways*, and *to save their souls from death*; to be ready to supply men's outward wants and necessities, to comfort them in their sorrows, and to relieve them in their affliction and distress.

And these works of compassion and charity are perhaps more particularly intended here in the text, for so the *Chaldee paraphrase* interprets these words of *Solomon*, as a precept of charity, rendering them thus, *Do all thou can'st, according to thy utmost ability in alms and charity*: for nothing but this will turn to our account in another world; no other way of laying out our estates, will be of any advantage to us in the future state. And though I do not think *Solomon* did here intend to exclude any part of religious practice, yet he might very well have a more especial eye and regard to this, as one of the principal instances and best evidences of a true and sincere piety, according to that of *St. James*, Chap. i. Ver. last. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*. To be sure, our Saviour lays mighty weight upon it, by making it the great article by which men shall be tried at the judgment of the great day. And indeed no religion is to be valued, that wants humanity and compassion; for so far as it departs from this, it departs from the true nature of God and religion.

So that it is a vast work which lies upon our hands, and which every one of us, from the highest to the lowest, are engaged in; this business of religion, this care of our whole man, and of our whole duty, of the inward frame and disposition of our minds, and of all our words and actions, *to keep our hearts with all diligence*, and carefully to observe and govern all the inclinations and motions of our souls, and *to order our whole conversation aright*; in a word, to do God all the service, and men all the good that possibly we can, while we are in this world. This is the *first*.

2. And because *in many things we offend all*, and *there is no man that sinneth not*, another part of our work and care is, in case of transgression and miscarriage in any part of our duty, to exercise repentance for it, that so we may be reconciled to God, and at peace with him.

And this is absolutely necessary, because our life and happiness depend upon it, and *except we repent we must perish*, and be miserable for ever. It cannot be denied but that this work of repentance is very harsh and unpleasant, like the taking of physick, and searching into a wound; but because it tends to our health and safety, and is the necessary way and means to a better condition, this severity must be submitted to, if we desire to be cured, and have a mind to be well; and the sooner we make use of this remedy the better, we shall find so much the less difficulty and pain in the cure.

And

And there is great reason why we should frequently exercise and renew our repentance, because our failings are frequent, and in one kind or other we offend and provoke God every day : especially when we are coming to the holy sacrament, in which we solemnly renew our covenant with God, and promise him better obedience for the future ; we should examine our lives more strictly, and call our sins more particularly to remembrance, and exercise a most solemn and deep repentance for them ; this is the way to keep our accounts in a good measure even. And this surely is great wisdom, to provide that we may have no long account to make up, no great scores to wipe off, when we come to be overtaken by sickness, and to lie upon our death-bed ; that *innumerable transgressions* unrepented of may not then *compass us about*, and stare us in the face, and fill our souls with fear and confusion, with horror and amazement in a dying hour ; that an insupportable load of guilt may not then lie upon our minds, and oppress our consciences, when we are least able to bear it, and most unfit to deal with it, when we may not have time to call our sins particularly to remembrance, and to exercise a particular repentance for them, and yet perhaps a general repentance may not be sufficient, and available with God, for the pardon and forgiveness of them.

Therefore we should exercise ourselves much in this work of repentance in the days of our health, when we are fittest for it, and when it will be most acceptable to God, and when the sincerity of it will be most evident and comfortable to us, when we may know it to be true by the real and certain effects of it, in the change and amendment of our lives. Whereas a death-bed repentance is infinitely hazardous, because we may not perhaps have time and opportunity for the exercise of it ; or if we should have that, yet hardly can we have opportunity for the trial of it, whether it be sincere or not, and consequently must needs die very uncomfortably, and in great doubt and anxiety of mind, what will be our fate and doom in another world.

So that it is a great work which lies upon our hands, and equally concerns every one of us. The business of religion, which consists in the strict care of our duty to God and man, and in the frequent exercise of repentance for the sins and miscarriages of our lives ; and we may consequently judge how great a care and diligence a work of so much difficulty, and of so great moment and importance does require and call for at our hands. But besides this, we must in the

II. Place likewise be diligent in our particular-calling and charge, in that province and station which God hath appointed us, whatever it be ; whether it consists in the labour of our hands, or in the improvement of our minds, in order to the gaining of knowledge for our own pleasure and satisfaction, and for the use and benefit of others ; whether it lie in the skill of government, and the administration of publick justice ; or in the management of a great estate, of an honourable rank and quality above others, to the best advantage, for the honour of God, and the benefit and advantage of men, so as by the influence of our power and estate, and by the authority of our example, to contribute all we can to the welfare and happiness of others.

For it is a great mistake to think that any man is without a calling, and that God does not expect that every one of us should employ himself in doing good in one kind or other. Some persons indeed, by the privilege of their birth and quality, are above a common trade and profession, but they are not hereby either exempted or excused from all business, and allowed to live unprofitably to others, because they are so plentifully provided for themselves : nay, on the contrary, they have so much the greater obligation, having the liberty and leisure to attend the good of others ; the higher our character and station is, we have the better opportunities of being publickly useful and beneficial ; and the heavier will our account be, if we neglect these opportunities. Those who are in a low and private condition, can only shine to a few, but they that are advanced a great height above others, may, like the heavenly bodies, dispense a general light and influence, and scatter happiness and blessings among all that are below them.

And as they are capable of doing more good than others, so with more ease and effect ; that which persons of an inferior rank can hardly bring others to, by all the importunity of counsel and persuasion, as namely, to the practice of any virtue, and the quitting and abandoning of any vice, a prince and a great man that is
good

good himself may easily gain them to, without ever speaking a word to them, by the silent authority and powerful allurements of his example. So that though every man have not a particular profession, yet the highest among men have some employment allotted to them by God, suitable to their condition, a province which he expects they should administer and adorn with great care.

The great business of the lower part of mankind is to provide for themselves the necessaries of life, and it is well if they can do it with all their care and diligence; but those who are of a higher rank, their proper business and employment is to dispense good to others; which surely is a much happier condition and employment, according to that admirable saying of our Saviour, mentioned by St. Paul, *It is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive.* Those of meaner condition can only be *men* to one another, and it were well if they would be so; but he that is highly raised and advanced above others, hath the happy opportunity in his hands, if he have but the heart to make use of it, to be *a kind of God to men.*

Let no man then, of what birth, or rank, or quality soever, think it beneath him to serve God, and to be useful to the benefit and advantage of men; let us remember *the Son of God*, a person of the highest quality and extraction that ever was, who spent himself wholly in this blessed work of doing good, toiled and laboured in it as if it had been for his life, submitted to all the circumstances of meanness, to all the degrees of contempt, to all kind of hardship and sufferings, for the benefit and salvation of men, sweat drops of blood, and at last poured it all forth in full streams, to save us from eternal misery and ruin; and is any of us better than *the Son of God, the heir of all things, and the elder brother of us all?* Shall any of us, after this, think ourselves too good to be employed in that work which God himself disdained not to do, when he appeared in the likeness and nature of man?

If we would esteem things rightly, and according to reason, the true privilege and advantage of greatness is, to be able to do more good than others; and in this the majesty and felicity of God himself doth chiefly consist, in his ready and forward inclination, and in his infinite power and ability to do good. The creation of the world was a great and glorious design, but this God only calls his *work*; but to preserve and support the creatures which he hath made, to bless them and to do them good, to govern them by wise laws, and to conduct them to that happiness which he designed for them, this is his *rest*, his *perpetual sabbath*, his great *delight and satisfaction* to all eternity; to do good is our duty and our business, but it is likewise the greatest pleasure and recreation, that which refresheth the heart of God and man.

I have insisted the longer upon this, that those who are thought to be above any calling, and to have no obligation upon them, but to please themselves, may be made sensible, that according to their ability and opportunity, they have a great work upon their hands, and more business to do than other men; which if they would but seriously mind, they would not only please God, but, I dare say, satisfy and please themselves much better than they do in any other course. I know it is a duty particularly incumbent upon the lower part of mankind, to be diligent in their particular calling, that so they may provide for themselves and their families; but this is not so proper for this place, and if it were, the necessity of human life will probably prompt and urge men more powerfully to this, than any argument and persuasion that I can use. I proceed therefore in the

Second place, to offer some considerations to excite our care and diligence in this great work, which God hath given us to do in this world, I mean chiefly the business of religion, in order to the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls. And to this purpose, I shall offer five or six arguments, reserving the great motive and consideration in the text to the last, *Because there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.*

I. Let us consider the nature of our work, which is such, as may both excite and encourage our diligence and care about it. It is indeed a *service*, but such as is our *perfect freedom*; it is the service of God, whom to serve is the greatest honour that man or any other creature is capable of; it is obedience, but even obedience, considering our ignorance and frailty, is much wiser and safer for us, than a total exemption from all law and rule; for the laws which God hath given us,
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are not imposed upon us merely for his will and pleasure, but chiefly for our benefit and advantage. So that to obey and please God, is in truth nothing else but to do those things which are really best for ourselves.

Besides that this work of religion will abundantly recompense all the labour and pains it can cost, if we consider the *fruit* and *end* of it, which is *the salvation of our souls*; so St. Paul assures us, *Rom. vi. 22.* that if we have *our fruit unto holiness*, our *end* shall be *everlasting life*. Nay, this work doth not want its present encouragement and reward, if we consider the peace and pleasure which attends it; *Great peace*, saith *David*, *have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them*. Religion doth not design to rob men of the true delights of life, of any lawful pleasure and enjoyment; it only appoints them their due place, and season, and measure, without which they cannot be truly tasteful and pleasant: if we make pleasure and recreation our business, it will become a burden, and leave a sting behind it; but if we make it our great business to be good, and to do good, we shall then take true pleasure in our recreations and refreshments, we shall *eat our bread with joy, and drink our wine with a merry heart*, as *Solomon* expresseth it a little before the text. Religion doth not ordinarily debar men of any contentment, which they can wisely and safely take, in any of the enjoyments of this life, but directs us to do those things which will yield the truest and most refined pleasure, and so governs us in the use and enjoyment of worldly comforts, that there shall be no bitterness in them, or after them: and in truth, after all our search and enquiry after pleasure and happiness, we shall find that there is no solid and lasting pleasure, but in living righteously and religiously: and the pleasure of this is so great, that a heathen philosopher, speaking of a virtuous life, according to the true precepts of philosophy, breaks out in this rapture and transport concerning the wonderful pleasure of it, *Vel unus dies vere & ex præceptis tuis ætus peccandi immortalitati est antefendus*, *Even one day truly spent according to thy precepts is to be valued above an immortality of sinning*. There is no life so pleasant as that of the pious and good man, who being contented with himself, every thing about him contributes to his cheerfulness, *Gratior it dies, & soles melius nitent*; *The day passeth more pleasantly, and the sun shines brighter to him*; and every object which he beholds is more delightful, because the man is at peace and ease within himself.

II. Let us consider how great our work is, and then we shall easily be convinced what care it requires, what diligence it calls for from us. Very few persons, I doubt, are sufficiently sensible, how much thought and consideration, how much care and vigilancy, how firm a resolution and earnest attention of mind is necessary to the business of religion, to the due cultivating and improving of our minds, to the mortifying and subduing of our lusts, to the mastering and governing of our passions, to the reforming of our tempers, to the correcting of all the irregularities of our appetites and affections, and to the reducing of our crooked wills, which have been long obstinately bent the wrong way, to the straightness of that rule which God hath given us to walk by.

Few, I fear, consider how much pains is necessary to the storing of our minds with good principles, and to the fixing and riveting in our souls all the proper motives and considerations to engage us to virtue, that in all the occasions of our lives they may have their due force and influence upon us. Few of us take pains to understand the just bounds and limits of our duty, and so to attend thereto, as to be always upon our guard against the infinite temptations of human life, and the many malicious enemies of our souls, that we may not be circumvented by *the wiles of the Devil*, nor caught in those snares which he lays before us in our ways, that we be not wrought upon by the insinuations, nor over-reached by *the deceitfulness of sin*.

How few consider what care and watchfulness of ourselves, what constancy and fervency of prayer to God is necessary to the due discharge of every part of our duty; or to the right exercise of every grace and virtue! Besides an earnest imploring of the divine assistance, there is required likewise a particular care and application of mind, that we may fail in no point; and that, as St. *James* expresseth it, *We may be entire, wanting nothing*; that our faith and our hope, our devo-

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tion and our charity, our humility and our patience, and every other grace may be exercised in the best manner, and *have its proper work.*

III. Consider, what incredible pains men will take, what diligence they will use for bad purposes, and for ends infinitely less considerable; *ut jugulent homines, surgunt de nocte latrones, ut teipsum serves, non expergiscere?* Thieves will rise and travel by night to rob and kill, and shall we use no care, no vigilance to save ourselves? What drudges and slaves are many men to their sensual pleasures and lusts? How hot and fierce upon revenge? And what hazards will they run to satisfy this unreasonable and devilish passion; and thereby make way for a speedy and bitter repentance, which always treads upon the heels of revenge? For no sooner hath any man executed his rage upon another, but his conscience presently turns it upon himself?

How industrious do we see men at their recreations and sports, taking really more pains for the sake of pleasure, than the poor man does that works for his living?

What a violent thirst, and insatiable covetousness possesseth some men after learning and knowledge? How will they toil and watch, wear out their eyes, and waste their spirits, and pursue their studies, not only with the neglect of fitting diversion, but even of the necessary support and reparation of nature, by meat and sleep? nay, many times to increase their learning, they weaken their understandings, and for the gaining of more knowledge, do disable that power and faculty which should make use of it when they have it.

How will men attend for several hours to a lewd and extravagant play, and sit not only with patience, but with delight to hear things spoken, which are neither fit to be spoken nor heard?

And above all, how eager and earnest, how busy and industrious are a great part of mankind, in the pursuit of their ambitious and covetous designs; how sorely will they labour and travel? how hardly will they be contented to fare, and how meanly will they live themselves, to make they know not whom rich? even any body that happens to come in their way, when they make their last wills.

And are men at all this pains for compassing of their low and mean, of their vile and wicked designs, to do themselves no good; nay, for the most part, to hurt and destroy themselves; and are the present pleasures and satisfaction of our minds, and eternal life and happiness in another world, things of no value and esteem with us? Is salvation itself so slight and inconsiderable a thing, that it deserves none of this care and diligence to be used for the obtaining of it?

IV. Consider that when we come to die, nothing will yield more true and solid consolation to us, than the remembrance of an useful and well spent life, a life of great labour and diligence, of great zeal and faithfulness in the service of God; and on the contrary, with what grief and regret shall we look back upon all those precious hours which we have so fondly misplaced in sin and vanity! How shall we then wish that we could recall them, and live them over again, that we might spend them better? all that time which now lies upon our hands, and we know not how to bestow it and pass it away, will then most assuredly lie heavy upon our consciences. What anguish and confusion have I seen in the looks and speeches of a dying man, caused only by the grievous remembrance of an unprofitable and ill-spent life! So foolish are many men, as never seriously to think for what end they came into the world, till they are just ready to go out of it.

V. Consider that the degrees of our happiness in another world, will certainly bear a proportion to the degrees of our diligence and industry, in serving God and doing good. And it is an argument of a mean spirit, not to aspire after the best and happiest condition, which is to be attained by us. To be contented barely to live, when by our pains and industry we may become considerable, and raise our selves above the common level of men, is a sign of a poor and degenerate mind; so it is in the business of religion, to be contented with any low degrees of virtue and goodness, and consequently of glory and happiness, when by a great diligence and industry in *serving our generation according to the will of God*, we may be of the number of those, *whose reward shall be great in heaven*, and have a place there, among *those righteous persons, who shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*

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Besides, that it may prove a thing of a dangerous consequence to us, to deal thus strictly with God, and to drive so near and hard a bargain with him; we may easily miss of happiness, and come short of heaven, if we only design just to get thither; we may be mistaken in the degree of holiness and virtue, which is necessary to recommend us to the divine favour and acceptance, and to make us capable of the glorious reward of eternal life: for *unto whomsoever much is given, faith our Saviour, of him much shall be required*; to him that hath only *one talent* committed to him, it may be sufficient to have gained *one*; but he that hath *many talents* entrusted with him, may gain *one*, and yet be a *wicked and slothful servant*; proportionably to our advantages and opportunities, our duty encreaseth upon our hands, and better and greater things may justly be expected from us. The consideration whereof should make us unwearied in our endeavours of doing good, *and stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

VI. And lastly, Let us consider the argument here in the text, *There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither we are going. Longe quiescendi tempora fata dabunt*, we shall then rest from our labours, and our works will follow us. This life is the time of our activity and working, the next is the season of retribution and recompence; we shall then have nothing to do, but either to reap and enjoy the comfort of well-doing, or to repent the folly of an ill-spent life, and the irreparable mischief which thereby we have brought upon ourselves; *There is no work, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest*; intimating that our life is a continual journey towards the grave, shorter or longer as God pleaseth; and many times when we think ourselves far from it, we may be just upon it, and ready to stumble into it. So that our time of working may be very short, to be sure it is very uncertain.

And it is very well worth our consideration, that as *there is no work nor wisdom in the grave*, so there is very little to be exercised when we come to draw near to it, whether it be by sickness or old-age: *Sufficient surely for that day will be the evil thereof.* We had need then to have nothing else to do, but to be old and weak, to be sick and die; we shall find that to be burden and trouble enough.

Let us therefore work the work of him that sent us into the world, while it is day; for the night cometh, faith our Saviour, (by which may probably be meant the time of sickness or old-age) *the night cometh when no man can work*; so that what we do, we must do quickly, mind the work which is before us, and ply it with all our might, as if it were the last opportunity we should ever have; and so it may prove for aught we know, for it is ten to one but that some here present, and God knows which of us it may be, may now have the last opportunity in our hands, and that but a slippery hold of it, and may never have this counsel given us again, nor perhaps be long in a capacity to make use of it; for when death hath once overtaken us, it will fix us in an unchangeable state, *as the tree falls, so it shall lie.*

This is the time of our work and preparation for another world, and what we do towards it in this life, will avail us in the other; but if this opportunity be neglected, there is nothing to be done by us afterwards, but to inherit the fruit of our own folly and neglect; to sit down in everlasting sorrow, and to be immutably fixed in that miserable state, which whilst we were in this world we could never be persuaded to take any tolerable care to avoid.

And if we can do nothing for ourselves to help and relieve us in that state, much less can we think it can be done for us by others, by the consigning of *masses* and *prayers*, of *merits* and *indulgencies* to our use and benefit in another world. No, so soon as ever we are passed into the other state, we shall enter upon a condition of happiness or misery, that is never to be altered. So that this life is the proper season for wisdom to shew itself, and to exercise our best industry for the attaining of happiness; it will be too late afterwards to think of altering or bettering our condition, for death will conclude and determine our state one way or other, and what we are when we leave the world, good or bad, fitted for happiness or misery, we shall remain and continue so for ever.

Therefore it infinitely concerns all of us, to exercise our best wisdom in this present life, and what we have to do for our souls, and for all eternity, *to do it with our might*: to contrive and use the best means to be happy, while the opportunity of doing

ing it is yet in our hands; we may easily let it slip, but no care, no wisdom, no diligence, no repentance can retrieve it; when it is once lost, it is lost for ever.

Hear then the conclusion of the whole matter; would we enjoy ourselves and the peace of our minds while we live? would we have good hopes and comfort in our death, and after death would we be happy for ever? Let us lay the foundation of all this, in the activity and industry of a religious and holy life; a life of unspotted purity and temperance in the use of sensual pleasures, of sincere piety and devotion towards God, of strict justice and integrity, and of great goodness and charity towards men.

And let us consider that many of us are a great way already on our journey towards the grave, that our day is declining apace, and the shadows of the evening begin to be stretched out; therefore that little of our life which is yet behind us should be precious to us, *ut esse solis gratius lumen solet, jam jam cadentis*, we should improve that which yet remains, as it were for our lives, always remembering that our only opportunity of working, of designing and doing great and happy things for ourselves, is on this side the grave, and that this opportunity will expire and die with us; *For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither we are going.*

Now God of his infinite mercy, grant, that we may all of us know, in this our day, the things which belong to our present peace, and future happiness, before they be hid from our eyes, for his mercy's sake in Jesus Christ; to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, now and for evermore.

S E R M O N CLIX.

Of the Blessedness of Giving, more than that of Receiving.

ACTS xx. 35.

And to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

The whole Verse runs thus,

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive.

THE words which I have read to you, have this particular advantage to commend them to our more attentive consideration, that they are a remarkable saying of our Lord himself, not recorded by any of the *Evangelists* among his other sayings and discourses, but remembered by the apostles, and by some of them delivered to St. Paul, and by him preserved to us in his farewell-speech to the *elders of Ephesus*. In which after he had given them some needful advice, and commended them to the grace of God, he appeals to them concerning the integrity of his conversation among them; that he was so far from seeking his own advantage, and from coveting any thing that was theirs, that he had not only supported himself,

himself, but also relieved others by the labour of his own hands; giving them herein a great example of charity, which it seems he was wont to enforce upon them by an excellent saying of our Lord, *It is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

And it is really a particular endearment of this saying to us, that being omitted by the *evangelists*, and in danger of being lost and forgotten; it was so happily retrieved by St. *Paul*, and recorded by St. *Luke*. The common sayings of ordinary persons perish without regard, and are spilt like water upon the ground, which no body goes about to gather up; but the little and short sayings of wise and excellent men are of great value, like the dust of gold; or the least sparks of diamonds. And such is this saying of our Lord, which is not only valuable out of respect to its Author, but for the sake of that admirable sense which is contained in it.

Some interpreters have needlessly troubled themselves to find these words or something equivalent to them in the gospel. That the sense of them may be inferred from several passages in the gospels, none will deny; but that they are either expressly to be found there, or that there is any saying that sounds to the same sense, I think no body can shew. Besides that St. *Paul* cites a particular sentence or saying of our Lord, that was ἐηώς, and in those very words spoken by him.

And there is no reason to imagine, that the gospels are a perfect and exact account of all the sayings and actions of our Lord, though St. *Luke* calls his gospel, *A Treatise of all things that Jesus did and spake*; that is of the principal actions of his life, and the substance of his discourses, at least so much of them as is needful for us to know: for St. *Luke* leaves out several things related by the other *evangelists*. And St. *John* expressly tells us, that *Jesus* did innumerable things not recorded in the history of his life: and there is no doubt but the disciples of our Lord remember'd many particular sayings of his, not set down in the gospels, which upon occasion they did relate and communicate to others, as they did this to St. *Paul*.

The words themselves are the proposition I shall speak to, *It is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive.* This I know seems a paradox to most men, who know no happiness but in hoarding up what they have, and in receiving and heaping up more; but as strange as this saying may appear, the sense of it is owned and assented to by those great oracles of reason, the wisest and most considerate heathens; τὸ ἀρετῆς μᾶλλον τὸ εὖ ποιεῖν ἢ τὸ εὖ πάσχειν, *It is a more virtuous thing to do, than to receive good*, says *Aristotle*; which according to his opinion was to say, it is a greater happiness, because he placed happiness in the practice and exercise of virtue. To the same purpose is that saying of *Plutarch*, εὖ ποιεῖν ἥδιόν ἐστιν ἢ πάσχειν. *There is more pleasure in doing a kindness, than in taking one.* And that of *Seneca*, *Malim non recipere beneficia, quam non dare*; *Of the two, I had rather not receive benefits, than not bestow them.* And that the heathen have spoken things to the same sense with this saying of our Saviour's, is so far from being any prejudice to this saying of our Saviour, that it is a great commendation of it, as being an argument that our Saviour hath herein said nothing but what is very agreeable to the best notions of our minds, and to the highest reason and wisdom of mankind. In the handling of this proposition, I shall do these two things.

First, Endeavour to convince men of the truth and reasonableness of it.

Secondly, to persuade men to act suitably to it.

First, to convince men of the truth and reasonableness of this principle, that *It is more blessed to give, than to receive.* And this will fully appear by considering these three things.

I. That it is an argument of a more happy spirit and temper.

II. Of a more happy state and condition. And,

III. That it shall have the happiness of a greater reward.

I. To be governed by this principle, is an argument of a more happy spirit and temper. To do good, to be useful and beneficial to others, to be of a kind and obliging disposition, of a tender and compassionate spirit, sensible of the streights and miseries of others, so as to be ready to ease and relieve them (for to this kind of goodness and charity the apostle applies this saying of our Saviour, as appears by the context) this certainly is the happiest spirit and temper in the world, and is an argument of a noble, and generous, and large heart, that is not contracted within itself,

and confined to little and narrow designs, and takes care of no body but itself, envying that others should share with it, and partake of its happiness, but is free and open, *ready to do good, and willing to communicate*, and thinks its own happiness increased by making others happy.

It is the property of narrow and envious spirits to think their own happiness the greater, because they have it alone to themselves; but the noblest and most heavenly dispositions desire that others should share with them in it. Of all beings, God is the farthest removed from envy and ill-will, and the nearer any creature approacheth to him, the farther it is from this hellish disposition. For it is the temper of the devil to grudge happiness to others; he envied that man should be in paradise, and was restless 'till he had got him out.

Some perfections are of a more solitary nature and disposition, and shine brightest when they are attained to but by few, as knowledge and power: but the nature of goodness is to diffuse and communicate itself, and the more it is communicated, the more glorious it is. And therefore knowledge and power may be in a nature most contrary to God's; the devil hath these perfections in a high degree.

To receive good from others, is no certain argument of virtue or merit, for the unworthy and unthankful often receive benefits: but to be good and do good, is the excellency of virtue, because it is to resemble God in that which is the most amiable and glorious of all his other perfections. And therefore when *Moses* desires to see God's glory, *Exod. xxxiii. 19.* he tells him, that *he will cause all his goodness to pass before him.* Without goodness the power and wisdom of God would be terrible, and raise great dread and superstition in the minds of men. Without goodness power would be tyranny and oppression, and wisdom would degenerate into craft and mischievous contrivance. So that a being endowed with all power and wisdom, and yet wanting goodness, would be a dreadful and omnipotent mischief. We are apt to dread power, and to admire knowledge, and to suspect great wisdom and prudence; but we can heartily love and reverence nothing but true goodness. 'Tis not the infinite power and knowledge of God considered abstractedly, and in themselves, but these in conjunction with his great goodness, that make him at once the most awful and amiable being in the world; which is the reason why our Saviour, *Matth. v. 48.* speaks of the mercy, and goodness, and patience of God, as the top and sum of the divine perfections, *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* How is that? In being good to the evil and unthankful, as God is, who makes his sun to rise, and his rain to fall, not only on the just but unjust. And therefore St. Luke renders it, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful.* To be good and merciful as God is, is to be perfect as he is; because it is to imitate him in that which is his chief perfection.

Gratitude is one of the noblest virtues, and our goodness to men is gratitude in us to God. It is an acknowledgment of the blessings we have received from God; the best use we can make of them, and the best requital we can make to him for all his benefits. For we can give him nothing again, because he stands in need of nothing. But a truly grateful person, who hath a kindness done to him by one that is out of all capacity and reach of requital, will enquire whether there be any of his family and relations, to whom he may shew kindness for his sake. Yea, benefits have often been requited by thankful persons, upon those who did but resemble their benefactors, though they were no ways related to them. Though we can do nothing to God, yet we may do it to men, who are *made after the image of God.* We may shew kindness to his relations, and to those of his household and family, to his creatures, to his servants, to his friends, and to his children here in the earth.

Besides that our goodness to others like ourselves, is an argument of great consideration and prudence; it is a sign that we know ourselves, and consider what we are, and what we may be; it shews that we have a due sense of the indigence and infirmity of human nature, and of the change and vicissitude of human affairs; it is a just sense and acknowledgment of our state, that we are insufficient for our own happiness, and must depend upon the kindness, and good-will, and friendship of other men; that we all either do or may stand in need of others one time or other:

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for he who is now in the greatest plenty and abundance of all things, and thinks *his mountain so strong, that he can never be moved*, may by a sudden revolution of fortune, by a thousand accidents, be thrown down from his height of prosperity, into the depth of misery and necessity.

And as it is an argument of consideration, so of great prudence. He that is good to others, apt to commiserate their sad case, and to relieve them in their streights, takes the wisest and surest way that can be, to incline and engage others to be good to him, when it shall fall to his lot to stand in need of their kindness and pity. Upon this account our Saviour commends the *prudence of the unjust steward*, who laid in for the kindness of others, against himself should have occasion for it.

And though it should happen otherwise, and that we should have an uninterrupted tenour of prosperity (which few or none have) or that coming to stand in need of others, our kindness should meet with no equal returns, yet it would not be quite lost; for as *Seneca* truly says, *delectat etiam sterilis beneficii conscientia*, tho' our charity should fall upon stony and barren ground, and we should find no fruit of it from those whom we have obliged, yet there is a pleasure in being conscious to ourselves, that we have done well, what was worthy and generous, and what became wise and considerate men to do, whatever the event and success be: for setting aside all selfish respects, purely out of humanity and charity, and a generous compassion, we should be ready as we have opportunity to do good to all that stand in need of our kindness and help.

So that a disposition to do good is the best and happiest temper of mind, because it is the nearest resemblance of the divine nature, which is perfectly happy: it is a grateful acknowledgment of our obligations to God, and all that we can render to him for his benefits; it is an argument of great wisdom and consideration; it gives ease and satisfaction to our minds: and the reflection upon any good that we have done, is certainly the greatest contentment and pleasure in the world, and a felicity much beyond that of the greatest fortune of this world: whereas the spirit contrary to this is always uneasy to itself; the envious and malicious, the hard-hearted and ill-natured man carries his own torment and hell about him, his mind is full of tumultuous agitations and unquiet thoughts: but were our nature rectified and brought back to its primitive frame and temper, we should take no such pleasure in any thing as in acts of kindness and compassion, which are so suitable and agreeable to our nature, that they are peculiarly called *humanity*, as if without this temper we were not truly *men*, but something else disguised under a human shape.

II. *To give*, is an argument of a more happy state and condition, than *to receive*. To receive from others, is an argument of indigency, and plainly shews that we are in want and necessity; either that we stand in need of something, or that we think we do; and either of these conditions is far from perfect happiness: but to give, is an argument of fulness and sufficiency, that we have more than is necessary for ourselves, and something to spare.

To receive kindness from others, supposeth we stand in need of it; and to stand in need of it, is to be in a state of being obliged and indebted. Obligation is a dear thing, and a real debt which lies heavy and uneasy upon a grateful mind: so much obligation as any man hath to another, so much he hath lost of his own liberty and freedom; for it gives him that hath obliged us, a superiority and advantage over us. And what *Solomon* says of *the borrower*, that *he is a servant to the lender*, is in proportion true in this case, that *the receiver is a servant to the giver*.

But to be able to benefit others, is a condition of freedom and superiority, and is so far from impairing our liberty, that it shews our power: and the happiness which we confer upon others, by doing them good, is not only a contentment to ourselves, but we do in some sort enjoy the happiness we give, in being conscious to ourselves that we are the authors of it. And could we but once come to this excellent temper, to delight in the good that others enjoy, as if it were our own (and it is our own, if we be the instruments of it, and take pleasure in it) I say, could we but once come to this temper, we need not envy the wealth and splendor of the most prosperous upon earth; for upon these terms the happiness of the

the whole world would in some sort be ours, and we should have a share in the pleasure and satisfaction of all that good which happens to any man any way, especially by our means.

To depend upon another, and to receive from him, and to be beholden to him, is the necessary imperfection of creatures: but to confer benefits upon others, is to resemble God, and to approach towards divinity. *Aristotle* could say, that by narrowness and selfishness, by envy and ill-will, men degenerate into beasts, and become wolves and tygers to one another; but by goodness and kindness, by mutual compassion and helpfulness, men become gods to one another. To be a benefactor, is to be as like God as 'tis possible for men to be, and the more any one partakes of this divine quality and disposition, the liker and the nearer he is to God, *who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works.*

The blessed angels, who behold the face of God continually, are as it were perfectly transformed into the image of the divine goodness, and therefore the work which with so much chearfulness and vigour they employ themselves in, is to be *ministring spirits for the good of the elect*, to bring men to goodness, and to encourage, and assist, and comfort them in well-doing. And our blessed Lord, when he was upon earth, did in nothing shew himself more like *the Son of God*, than in *going about doing good*. And the wonderful works which he did, gave testimony of his divinity, not so much as they were acts of power as of goodness, and wrought for the benefit and advantage of men. And the true advantage of greatness, and wealth, and power, does not consist in this, that it sets men above others, but that it puts them in a capacity of doing more good than others. Men are apt to call them their *bettors*, who are higher and richer than themselves; but in a true and just esteem of things, they only are our *bettors* who do more good than we. From the meanest creature below us, up to God himself, they are the best and happiest and most perfect beings, who are most useful and beneficial to others, who have the most power and the strongest inclinations to do good.

III. *To give*, that is, to be beneficial and to do good to others, hath the happiness of a great reward. There is no grace or virtue whatsoever, which hath in scripture the encouragement of more and greater promises than this, of happiness in general; of temporal happiness in this life; of happiness at death; and of everlasting happiness in the world to come.

1. For promises of happiness in general. *He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness endures for ever*, that is, shall never be forgotten, shall not pass unrewarded, *Prov. xiv. 21. He that giveth to the poor, happy is he. Matth. v. 7. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Luke vi. 38. Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom: for with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again*; that is, according to our goodness and compassion towards others, we must expect to find the charity of men, and the compassions of God towards us. *Job* speaks as if some eminent and peculiar blessing did attend and follow acts of charity, *Job xxv. 19. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me.*

2. Promises of temporal happiness in this life, *Psal. xxxvii. 3. Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Prov. xxviii. 27. He that giveth to the poor, shall not lack.* Nay, God hath promised to have a particular respect to such as do good, in every condition, and all kinds of troubles that befall them. *Psal. xli. 1, 2, 3. Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*

3. Of happiness in death. *The righteous, saith Solomon, Prov. xiv. 32. hath hope in his death.* By the *righteous* in scripture is frequently meant the *merciful and good man*. And so it is to be understood, as appears from the context; *He that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his maker: but he that honoureth him, hath mercy upon the poor. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.* If God designs to send calamities upon the earth, upon the place where the good man lives, which it would grieve him to see, or which he might

might be involved in, so as either to make his life uncomfortable, or to cut him off by a violent death; God considers the merciful man, and removes him out of the way, into a better and safer place, *Isaiab lvii. 1. The merciful man is taken away from the evil to come.*

4. The promises of eternal life and happiness in the world to come. *Luke xiv. 13, 14. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind: and thou shalt be blessed. For they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* And *Chap. xvi. 9. And I say unto you, saith our Lord, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that is, to do good with what you have, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.* *1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust to uncertain riches; but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* And the more to fix upon our minds the necessity of doing good, especially in ways of mercy and charity, our Lord represents this, as the great matter of enquiry at the great day of judgment, how they have behaved themselves in this kind, what good they have done, or omitted and neglected to do; especially to those who were in misery and want; and as if the sentence of eternal happiness or misery would accordingly pass upon them. And this methinks should make a mighty impression upon us, to think that when we shall appear before the great judge of the world, we are to expect mercy from him, according to the measure that we have shewed it to others.

And now if men be thoroughly convinced of the happiness of this temper, methinks it should be no difficult matter to persuade them to it. If we believe this saying of our Lord, that *it is more blessed to give, than to receive*; let us do accordingly.

I know that to carnal and earthly-minded men, this must needs seem a new and wrong way to happiness. For if we may judge of mens persuasions by their practice, (which seems to be a reasonable and good sure way of judging) I am afraid it will appear, that few believe this to be the way to happiness. If we mind the course of the world, and the actions of men, it is but too evident that most men place their greatest felicity in receiving and getting the good things of this world; almost *all seek their own things, and but few the good of others.* Many say, *who will shew us? who will do us any good?* but few ask that question, *What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* And when our Lord tells men that they must *give to the poor*, if they would have *treasure in heaven*; that they must be charitable, if they would be happy; that, *It is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive*, these are sad and melancholy sayings to those who have great possessions; and most men are ready with *the young man* in the gospel, to part with our Lord, and to break with him upon these terms.

But let us remember that this was *the saying of our Lord Jesus*, whom we all profess to believe, and to imitate in all things; but more especially let us do so in this, because it was not a bare speculation, a fine and glorious saying, like those of the philosophers, who said great and glorious things, but did them not; but this was his constant practice, the great work and business of his life. He who pronounced it the most blessed thing to do good, spent his whole life in this work, and *went about doing good.* To this end all his activity and endeavours were bent. This was the life which God himself, when he was pleased to become man, thought fit to lead in the world, *giving us herein an example, that we should follow his steps.* He made full tryal and experience of the happiness of this temper and spirit; for he was all on the giving hand. He would receive no portion and share of the good things of this world; he refused the greatest offers. When the people would have made him a king, he withdrew and hid himself; he was contented to be worse accommodated than the creatures below us. *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.* He would not so much as have any fixed abode and habitation, that he might be at liberty to go *about doing good.* He received nothing but injuries and affronts, base and treacherous usage from an ungrateful world, to whom he was so great and so universal a benefactor. The whole business of his life was *to do good, and to suffer evil for so*

so doing. So fixed and steady was he in his own principle and saying, *It is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive.* He gave away all that he had to do us good, he parted with his glory and his life, *emptied himself, and became of no reputation; and being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.*

So that he adviseth us nothing, but what he did himself; nor imposeth any thing upon us, from which he himself desired to be excused. And surely we have great reason to be in great love with this pattern, when that very goodness which he propounds to our imitation, was all laid out upon us, and redounds to our benefit and advantage; when our salvation and happiness are the effects of that goodness and compassion which he exercised in the world. He did it all purely for our sakes; whereas all the good we do to others, is a greater good done to ourselves.

So that here is an example and experiment of the thing in the greatest and most famous instance that the whole world can afford. The best and happiest man that ever was, the Son of God and the Saviour of men, and who is the most worthy to be the pattern of all mankind, *went about doing good,* and governed his whole life, and all the actions of it by this principle, that, *It is more blessed to give, than to receive.* *Let the same mind be in us that was in Jesus Christ: let us go and do likewise.*

S E R M O N CLX.

The Evil of corrupt Communication.

EPHES. iv. 29.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.

AS discourses against sin and vice in general are of great use, so it is likewise very necessary to level them against the particular vices of men, and to endeavour by proper and intrinsic arguments, taken from the nature of that vice we treat of, to dissuade and deter them from it; because this carries the discourse home to the consciences of men, and leaves them no way of escape. For this reason, and in compliance with their majesties pious proclamation, for the discountenancing and suppressing of prophaneness and vice, I have chosen to treat upon this subject, of corrupt and filthy communication, as being one of the reigning vices of this wicked and adulterous generation; of the evil whereof the generality of men are less sensible than almost of any other, that is so frequently and so expressly branded in scripture. And to this purpose I have pitched upon the words which I have read unto you, as containing a plain and express prohibition of this vice, *Let no corrupt communication, &c.*

I remember St. *Austin* in one of his epistles tells us, that *Tully* the great master of the art of speaking, says of one of the great orators, *Nullum unquam verbum quod revocare vellet, emisit.* That no word ever fell from him, that he could wish to have recalled. This I doubt is above the perfection of human eloquence, for a man

man always to make such a choice of his words, and to place them so fitly, that nothing he ever said could be changed for the better. But the greatest faults of speech are not those which offend against the rules of eloquence, but of piety, and virtue, and good manners: and who can say that his tongue is free from all faults in this kind, and *no word ever proceeded from him, which he could wish to have recalled.* In many things, says St. James, chap. iii. 2. *we offend all*; and in this kind as much perhaps, and as often as in any. He is a good and a happy man indeed, that seldom or never offends with his tongue. *If any man, as St. James goes on, offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*; that is, he hath attained to an eminent degree of virtue indeed, and is above the common rate of men, and may reasonably be presumed blameless in the general course of his life and practice, *and able, as it follows, to bridle the whole body*; that is, *to order his whole conversation aright.*

To govern the tongue is a matter of great difficulty, and consequently of great wisdom, and care, and circumspection; and therefore one of the great endeavours of a wise and good man, should be to govern his words by the rules of reason and religion; and we should every one of us resolve and say, as David does, *Psal. xxxix. 1. I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.* For as the virtues, so the vices of the tongue are many and great. In respect of the virtues of it, David calls it *the best member we have*; because of all the members and instruments of the body, it is capable of giving the greatest glory to God; and of doing the greatest good and benefit to men. And in respect of the vices of it, it may be as truly said to be *the worst member that we have*; because it is capable of doing the greatest dishonour to God, and the greatest mischief and harm among men. So that upon all accounts, we ought to have a great care of the government of our tongue, which is capable of being so useful and serviceable to the best and worst purposes, according as we restrain it and keep it in order, or let it loose to sin and folly.

And among all the vices of the tongue, as none is more common, so none is more misbecoming, and more contrary to the modesty of a man, and the gravity of a christian, than filthy and obscene talk; of the odious nature, and the evil and mischievous consequences whereof, both to ourselves and others, I design by God's assistance to treat at this time, from the words which I have read unto you, *Let no corrupt communication, &c.*

That by *corrupt* or *rotten communication*, is here meant filthy and obscene talk, is generally agreed among interpreters. By *that which is good to the use of edifying*, is meant such discourse, as is apt to build us up in knowledge and goodness, to make the hearers wiser and better. *That it may minister grace unto the hearers*, that is, such kind of discourse, as is acceptable to all; not nauseous and offensive to sober and virtuous persons, not apt to grate upon chaste and modest ears, and to put the hearers out of countenance.

So that the apostle doth here strictly forbid all lewd and filthy discourse amongst christians; and enjoins them so to converse with one another, that all their discourses may minister mutual benefit and advantage to one another, and tend to the promoting of piety and virtue; and may likewise be grateful to the hearers, carefully avoiding every thing that might put them to the blush, or any way trespass upon modesty and good manners, as all filthy communication does.

This sort of argument, though it be frequently mentioned in scripture, yet it is very seldom treated of in the pulpit, because it is a hard matter to be handled in a cleanly manner, and the preacher must always take good heed to himself, that his discourse be free from the contagion of that vice, which he reproveth and designs to correct and cure. And therefore to dissuade and deter men from this evil practice, so rife and common in the world, and that not only amongst the prophane and dissolute sort of persons, but those likewise who would seem to be more strict and religious, I hope it may be sufficient to all considerate persons, plainly to represent to them the heinous nature of the thing itself, together with the evil and dangerous consequences of it, both to ourselves and to others. And this I shall endeavour to do in the most general and wary terms, keeping all along, as much as is possible, aloof, and at distance from any thing that might either offend the

chaste and modest, or infect lewd and dissolute minds, which like tinder are always ready to take fire at the least spark.

Having premised this in general, my work at this time shall be to offer such particular considerations, as may fully convince men of the great evil and danger of this practice; and I hope may effectually prevail with them to leave it, and break it off. And they shall be these following.

I. That all filthy and corrupt communication is evidently contrary to nature, which is careful to hide and suppress, whatever in the general esteem of the sober part of mankind hath any thing of turpitude and uncomeliness in it: and wherever nature hath thought fit to draw a veil, we should neither by words nor actions expose such things to open view. *Quæ natura occultavit, says Tully, de Offic. Lib. 1. eadem omnes, qui sana sunt mente, remonent ab oculis, Those things which nature hath thought fit to hide, all men that are in their wits endeavour to keep out of sight. Nos autem naturam sequamur, says the same excellent moralist, ibid. & ab omni quod abhorret ab oculorum auriumque approbatione fugiamus. Let us, says he, follow nature, and flee every thing that is offensive either to the eye or ear of men. And this is so plain a lesson of nature, that an actor in a play will never fall into that absurdity, as to represent a grave and virtuous person offering any obscene or immodest word: and as the same author reasons, *Histrionem hoc videbit in scena, quod non videbit sapiens in vita? Shall an actor see this to be improper upon the stage, and a wise man not discern the absurdity and undecency of it in his life and conversation?**

II. All corrupt and filthy communication is a notorious abuse of one of the greatest and best gifts which God hath given us, and does directly contradict the natural end and use of speech. Our tongue is our glory, as the holy Psalmist often calls it, who hath duly considered the excellency and use of this noble faculty, and took great care to employ it to the purposes to which God gave it, and is herein an admirable pattern to us.

And next to our reason and understanding, our speech doth most remarkably distinguish us from the beasts, and sets us above them. *Hoc uno præstamus, vel maxime feris, quod colloquimur inter nos, & quod exprimere dicendo sensa possumus, says the great Roman orator, Cicero de Orat. Lib. 1. By this one thing we excel the beasts in a very high degree, that we can talk together, and by speech declare our minds to one another. By our understanding we know God, and by our tongues we confess and praise him: but to use our tongues to lewd and filthy discourse, is to pervert and abuse one of the best and noblest faculties which God hath given us; it is to affront him with his own gifts; and to fight against him with his own weapons. Do we thus requite the Lord? foolish creatures and unthankful.*

The two great ends for which this faculty of speech is given us, are to glorify God our maker, and to edify man our neighbour: but all corrupt communication contradicts both these ends; because, instead of praising God with pure hearts and lips, we do greatly dishonour him, by polluting our tongues with lewd and filthy talk: for hereby we offer a direct affront to his holy nature and laws. This renders us altogether unfit for the worship and service of Almighty God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and impurity of any kind. For how can we think that he will accept those prayers and praises, which are offered to him by such impure and unhallowed lips? when we dishonour God with the same mouth that we pretend to glorify him; and commit sin with the same tongue that we confess it? How can we hope that he will accept the sacrifice of such polluted lips, out of which proceed things so contrary and so inconsistent?

Those who thus pervert the use of speech, and instead of glorifying him who gave them this excellent gift, and setting forth his praise, defile their tongues with filthy and impure language, give just occasion to complain of them, as *Elihu* does of the wicked in his time, *Job. xxxv. 10, 11. None saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night? Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.* His meaning is, that they did not glorify God their maker, by singing his praises, which by being endued with this noble faculty of speech, (which he had denied to the creatures below man, the

beasts and birds) they only were capable of performing. The consideration of this high privilege, by which we do so much excel the creatures below us, ought to be a mighty obligation upon us to employ this gift of God in the service, and to the glory of the giver, and make us very careful not to offend him by it, or by any defilement of it, to render it unfit for one of the principal uses for which God bestowed it upon us.

Another great end of speech is to edify our neighbour. So the apostle here tells us in the text, that nothing should *proceed out of our mouths*, but what is good for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. But instead of that, corrupt communication offends the chaste and virtuous, and corrupts them who have vicious inclinations, by exciting and cherishing lewd imaginations in them, and making them that are filthy more filthy still.

III. Corrupt Communication is an evidence of a corrupt and impure heart, as polluted streams are a sign that the fountain is impure from whence they came. An impure mind may be covered and disguised by natural shame and outward reverence, in regard to the company, or from some other particular design; but when it breaks out at any time in lewd talk, our speech betrays us, and discovers the inward thoughts of our hearts, and makes them visible to every eye. For as our Saviour says, *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, Matt. xii. 34, 35. *How can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.*

There is not, says an excellent divine of our own, Dr. Barrow, a more certain sign of a mind utterly debauched from piety and virtue, than affecting such talk. A vain mind naturally venteth itself in frothy discourse; and lust boiling within, foams out in filthy talk. It is St. Jude's metaphor, when he describes that impure sect of the Gnosticks, he says of them, that *they were continually foaming out their own shame*, ver. 13. that is, by their lewd words and deeds they discovered the inward filthiness of their hearts. And therefore it is Tully's advice to him that would be perfectly virtuous, and not defective in any part of his duty, *Imprimis provideat, ne firmo vitium aliquod indicet inesse moribus*; de Offic. Lib. i. Let him in the first place, says he, take great care, that his speech betray not some vice or fault in his manners. Ἄνδρὸς χαρακτὴρ ἐκ λόγων γνωρίζεται. A man's character is commonly taken from his talk. Οἷός ἐστι τὸ πρὸς τοιαύτῳ καὶ ὁ λόγος, says Arislides, such as are the manners of a man, such is his discourse; and Quintilian, Lib. xi. c. 1. Profert enim mores plerumque oratio, & animi secreta detegit, nec sine causa Græci prodiderunt, ut vivit, quenquam etiam dicere. Our speech, for the most part, declares our manners, and discovers the secrets of our hearts; so that not without cause was it become a proverbial saying among the Greeks, that, *As the man lives, so also he speaks*. And to the same purpose the wise Son of Sirach, Ecclus. xxvii. 6, 7. *The fruit declareth if the tree hath been dressed; so is the utterance of a conceit in the heart of man. Praise no man before thou hearest him speak: for this is the trial of men.* And ver. 13. *The discourse of fools is irksom, and their sport is in the wantonness of sin.*

Immodest speech is not only an indication of an unchaste mind; but draws likewise a great suspicion upon a man's life. So strict a connexion commonly is there between a man's thoughts and words, and between his words and actions, that they are generally presumed to be all of a piece, and agreeable to one another.

IV. Corrupt Communication doth debauch and defile the minds of men, and that not only of the speaker, but likewise of the hearer of such discourse; because it gratifies and feeds a corrupt humour, and a vitiated appetite, besides that it disposeth and inclines to lewd and filthy actions: a smutty tongue and unchaste deeds are seldom far asunder, and do very often go together; for filthy talk and lewd practices seem to differ only in the occasion and opportunity; and he that makes no conscience of the one, will hardly stick at the other, when it can be done with secrecy and safety. The law of God forbids both alike, and his eye beholds both; *For there is not a word in my tongue*, says David, Psal. cxxxix. 4. *but thou O Lord, knowest it altogether.* So that whatever may deter us from lewd practice (the authority of God forbidding it, or the awe of his presence, who continually

stands by us, and hears and sees all that we say and do) is of equal force to restrain us from lewd and filthy words: for they both proceed from the same ill disposition of mind, and are done in equal contempt of the divine presence and authority.

V. It is uncivil and unmannerly, very disagreeable, and highly displeasing to all sober and modest persons. It is a clownish and rude thing, says *Tully, de Offic. lib. i. Si rerum turpitudini adhibetur verborum obscenitas, If to things which are immodest in themselves, we add the obscenity of words.*

Nothing that trespasses upon the modesty of the company, and the decency of conversation, can become the mouth of a wise and virtuous person. This kind of conversation would fain pass for wit among some sort of persons, to whom it is acceptable; but whatever favours of rudeness and immodesty, and ill manners, is very far from deserving that name; and they that are sober and virtuous, cannot entertain any discourse of this kind with approbation and acceptance: a well-bred person will never offend in this way; and therefore it cannot but be esteemed as an affront to modest company, and a rude presuming upon their approbation, impudently taking it for granted that all others are as lewd and dissolute as themselves.

This sort of conversation was not only *offensive* to righteous *Lot*, but was a perpetual vexation to him, and grieved him at his very heart. So *St. Peter* tells us, *2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. that Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds. In seeing and hearing, that is in seeing their lewd actions, and hearing their filthy talk, his life became a burden to him; and therefore God singled him out, and delivered him both from that wicked company, and from that dreadful judgment of fire and brimstone, which came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them with an utter destruction, for an example to all ages, and an admonition to all good men, that they ought to be in like manner affected, as righteous Lot was, with the filthy conversation of the wicked.*

VI. As by this practice we offend against nature and reason and true morality; so it is likewise a direct contempt and defiance of the christian religion, which does so strictly forbid, and so severely condemn it in christians. Our blessed Saviour seems more particularly to censure and condemn this vice, when he says, *Matth. xii. 36, 37. That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment. Every idle word, ἡ ἄσπετος, every vain and unprofitable word, that no way tends to edification; that is the very lowest sense the words can bear. But then how much more shall we give an account in that day of every lewd word, which tends to corrupt and debauch the minds and manners of men. Some copies have it, ἡ ὀνειδιστική, every naughty and wicked word, every false and malicious, and calumniating word: An idle word, says *St. Basil*, is that which is not "for edification, and such words shall come under examination in that great assembly of the whole world; and what then, says he, shall be done to words of "scurrility and calumny, and obscenity?"*

But that which will best direct us to the meaning of this phrase, is what the *Jewish* masters observed, that by an idle word the *Jews* did commonly understand immodest and unchaste speech, scurrilous and obscene words. And then it follows, *for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words, thou shalt be condemned.*

Men are commonly apt to make a very light matter of such words; but because they shew the mind and manners of the man, his inward temper and disposition, therefore men shall be called to a strict account for them in the day of judgment, and be condemned for lewd and dissolute words, as well as for acts of filthiness and uncleanness; because *these come from the heart, and defile the man*, they proceed from an impure spring and fountain; and though we only perceive them to come out of the mouth, yet they proceed out of the abundance of the heart, from an evil disposition of mind.

So that our Judge hath expressly warned us of this fault, and declared to us the danger of it. And therefore whosoever believes this declaration of our Saviour, and dreads the judgment of the great day, ought to take heed that he offend not with his tongue, in this or any other kind. Men make but little account of such words

now,

now, but they shall all be strictly accounted for another day; and what we utter now so freely and without blushing, will then strike us dumb, and be matter of the greatest shame and confusion to us, in the presence of God and his holy angels.

And so St. Paul likewise, not only here in the text, does forbid and reprove this practice, when he says, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth: but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers:* but in several other places of his epistles he most severely condemns it, as utterly misbecoming christians, and most directly contrary to our most holy profession, *Eph. v. 3, 4. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.* Here he forbids all lewd and filthy talk, as utterly misbecoming the conversation of christians, who should give no occasion to have the vices of this nature so much as once mentioned, much less practised among christians; *Let not these things, says he, be once named among you, as becometh saints; but rather giving of thanks.* Here he directs us to that which is the proper employment of the tongue, and one of the chief ends of speech; which is to praise and glorify God, and not to dishonour him by lewd and filthy talk. And this he urgeth again, as the proper fruit of our lips, ver. 20. *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And at the 5th verse of this chapter he appeals to christians, whether they had not been constantly taught and instructed, that all lewdness and filthiness, not only in act but in word, will certainly shut men out of the kingdom of heaven. *For this, says he, ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person,* (referring to those several sorts of uncleanness he had mentioned before; among which is *filthy and foolish talk*) *bath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God.* The apostle here speaks to the Gentile christians, who were newly converted from heathenism, and had been accustomed to make flight of these kinds of sin, which were so common among the idolatrous heathen, and part of the worship of their obscene deities: but he tells them that the christian religion which they had embraced, required another sort of conversation, and did strictly enjoin all manner of purity, both of heart and life, in all our words and actions; and that *as he that bath called us is holy, so we should be holy in all manner of conversation.* And whatever false teachers might insinuate, as if the christian religion did allow a greater liberty in in these things, and made that *a cloak for licentiousness*, hereby turning the grace of God, that is, the doctrine of the gospel, *into lasciviousness*, as St. Jude speaks, ver. 4, yet they would certainly find things quite otherwise in the issue, and that God, who punished the heathen for these vices, and sent such terrible judgments upon them, would much less let christians go unpunished, that should be found guilty of them, *Ephes. v. 6. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience,* that is the heathen world, who continued still in their infidelity, and lived in the practice of those sins; and would fall much more heavily upon christians, if after they had embraced this holy religion, they should allow themselves in any of those vile and impure practices, which they had been guilty of before, and which they had so solemnly promised to renounce and put off in their baptism.

And so likewise, *Coloss. iii. 5, 6, 7. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience, or unbelief; in the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them,* that is, whilst ye were heathens, and conversed among them, ye practised these vices: *but now, that is, now that you are become christians, put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, evil-speaking, filthy communication.* Ye see that *filthy communication* is reckoned among those sins of the Gentiles, which christians were utterly to quit and forsake, as contrary to the purity of the christian profession. And so St. Paul tells the *Thessalonians*, 1 *Thess. iv. 7. God bath not called us unto uncleanness; but unto holiness.* And he gives the same precept to the *Colossians*, chap. iv. 6. *Let your speech be always with grace,* that is, acceptable and useful, something that is worthy the hearing, *seasoned with salt,* that is, with prudence and discretion, which should always govern our speech, and keep it within the bounds of sobriety and

and modesty. As our talk should not be insipid and foolish, so much less rotten and unsavory, immodest and lewd.

And in his epistle to the *Philippians*, chap. iv. 8. he earnestly recommends the virtues that are directly contrary to this vice. *Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are honest, ὅσα σεμνὰ, whatsoever things are grave or venerable, ὅσα ἀσφα, whatsoever things are pure or chaste, think on these things*; that is, have great regard to them in your conversation and behaviour, there being no sort of virtue which the christian religion does not strictly enjoin and exact from us; and consequently whatsoever is light and frothy, and much more whatever is lewd and filthy, ought to be banished from the conversation of christians, as utterly inconsistent with the gravity and purity of that holy profession.

And the same apostle tells us, that all the promises of the gospel are so many arguments and obligations to purity and holiness, 2 *Cor.* vii. 1. *Having therefore these promises (dearly beloved) let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting, or practising, holiness in the fear of God.* And on the contrary, St. *John* tells us, that all impurity will be an effectual bar to our entrance into heaven. *Revel.* xxi. 27. speaking of the new *Jerusalem*, says he, *There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination.* So that if either the promises or threatenings of the gospel have any influence upon us, they will effectually restrain this vicious practice.

VII. and *Lastly*, All impure and filthy communication grieves the holy Spirit, and drives him away from us. And therefore after he had forbidden this vice here in the text, that *no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers*; he immediately adds, *and grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption*; hereby intimating that all corrupt and filthy communication grieves the holy Spirit of God, that blessed Spirit which is the seal and earnest of our redemption; that is, as the apostle himself explains it, of the redemption of our bodies, from the bondage of corruption, by the resurrection of them to eternal life. For it is the Spirit of God dwelling in us, which shall raise our bodies at the last day, and make them partakers of a blessed immortality. So the apostle says expressly, *Rom.* viii. 11. *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* If we defile our bodies, or any members of them by uncleanness, we grieve the Spirit of God which dwells in us, and force him out of his habitation; that blessed Spirit, which should quicken our mortal bodies, and is both the earnest and the cause of their resurrection to eternal life. For our bodies as well as our souls are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit of God dwells in them; and we banish him out of his temple whenever we prophane it by lewd and filthy speech.

And the apostle useth this argument more than once, to deter christians more especially from the sins of uncleanness. 1 *Cor.* iii. 16, 17. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.* The holy Spirit of God sanctifieth the place where he more especially resides, and makes it his temple; and so are our bodies as well as our souls; as the same apostle expressly tells us, *Chap.* vi. *Ver.* 18, 19, 20. where he argues against the sins of uncleanness, which are committed in the body, and by the members and instruments of it, from this consideration, that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. *Flee fornication*, says he. *Every sin a man doth, is without the body: but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body*; that is, the body is not the immediate instrument of other sins, as it is of those of uncleanness; and then it follows, *What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* Under the name of fornication the apostle comprehends all the sins of uncleanness, of which any member of the body is an instrument; so that the lasciviousness of the eye, or ear, or tongue, is a polluting and prophaning this temple of God, and drives the holy spirit of God out of his possession.

And

And whenever the Spirit of God departs from us, we cease to be the children of God, and forfeit the earnest of our eternal inheritance. *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, says the same apostle, Rom. viii. 8, 9. he is none of his, that is, he does not belong to him, in plain English, he is no christian.* So that as we would not forfeit the title of christians, and the blessed hope of a glorious resurrection, we must be very careful that *no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth, lest hereby we grieve the holy Spirit of God, by which we are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

I have now done with this argument, and what I have said concerning immodest and unchaste words, is of equal force against lascivious books, and pictures, and plays; all which do alike intrench upon natural modesty, and for that reason are equally forbidden and condemned by the christian religion; and therefore it may suffice to have named them. I shall only speak a few words concerning plays, which as they are now ordered among us, are a mighty reproach to the age and nation.

To speak against them in general, may be thought too severe, and that which the present age cannot so well brook, and would not perhaps be so just and reasonable; because it is very possible, they might be so framed, and governed by such rules, as not only to be innocently diverting, but instructing and useful, to put some vices and follies out of countenance, which cannot perhaps be so decently reformed, nor so effectually exposed and corrected any other way. But as the stage now is, they are intolerable, and not fit to be permitted in a *civilized*, much less in a *christian* nation. They do most notoriously minister both to infidelity and vice. By the prophaneness of them, they are apt to instill bad principles into the minds of men, and to lessen the awe and reverence which all men ought to have for God and religion: and by their lewdness they teach vice, and are apt to infect the minds of men, and dispose them to lewd and dissolute practices.

And therefore I do not see, how any person pretending to sobriety and virtue, and especially to the pure and holy religion of our blessed Saviour, can without great guilt, and open contradiction to his holy profession, be present at such lewd and immodest plays, much less frequent them, as too many do, who yet would take it very ill to be shut out of the communion of christians, as they would most certainly have been in the first and purest ages of christianity.

To conclude this whole discourse; let us always remember that gravity and modesty in all our behaviour and conversation, in all our words and actions, are duties indispensibly required by the christian religion, and the great fences of piety and virtue, and therefore ought with great conscience and care to be preserved and kept inviolable: and when these fences are once broken down, there is a wide gap made for almost any sin and vice to enter in. Immodest words do naturally tend to *corrupt good manners*, both in ourselves and others.

There is none of us, but would reckon it a very great infelicity to be deprived of that noble and useful faculty of speech, which is so peculiar to man, and which, next to our reason and understanding, doth most remarkably distinguish us from the brute beasts: but it is a much greater unhappiness to have this faculty, and to abuse it to vile and lewd purposes. The first may be only our misfortune: but this can never be without great fault, and gross neglect of ourselves; and much better had it been for us to have been born dumb, than thus *to turn our glory into shame and guilt*, by perverting this excellent gift of God, to the corrupting ourselves and others.

This I hope may be sufficient to restrain men from this vice, which I have all this while been speaking against; at least to preserve those which are not yet infected, from the contagion of it; and I hope to reclaim many from so bad a practice. And if any be so hardened in their lewd course, that no counsel of this kind can make impression on them, what remains, but to conclude in the words of the angel to St. John, *Revel. xxii. 11. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*

S E R M O N CLXI.

The true Remedy against the Troubles of Life.

JOHN xiv. 1.

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.**The first
Sermon on
this Text.*

IN which words our blessed Saviour does, upon a particular occasion, prescribe an universal remedy against trouble. And the particular occasion of this consolatory discourse which our Saviour here makes to his disciples, was this: he had often told them of his sufferings; but the conceit which they had entertained of his temporal reign, would not suffer them to admit any thought of such a thing as the sufferings or death of the *Messias*; and therefore it is said, that *these things did not sink into them*, and that *they understood them not*; men being generally very slow to understand what they do not like, and have no mind to. At last our Saviour tells them plainly, that how backward soever they were to believe it, the time of his sufferings and death was now approaching, and that he should shortly be *betrayed into the hands of men*, and be *crucified and slain*. At this his disciples were struck with great fear, and exceedingly troubled, both in contemplation of his sufferings, and of their own invaluable loss. To comfort them upon this occasion our Saviour directs his disciples to that course, which was not only proper in their present case, but is an universal antidote and remedy against all trouble whatsoever, and will not only serve to mitigate our trouble, and support our spirits under the fear and apprehension of future evils, but under present afflictions and sufferings; and to quiet and comfort our minds under the saddest condition, and forest calamities that can befall us. *Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

He does not only forbid them to be troubled, and counsel them against it, such advice is easily given, but not so easily to be followed: but he prescribes the proper remedy against trouble, which is trust and confidence in God the great Creator and wise Governor of the world; and likewise in himself, the blessed Son of God, and Saviour of mankind, *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

The words are variously translated: by some indicatively, *Ye do believe in God, and ye do believe in me, therefore be not troubled*; by others imperatively, *Believe in God, and believe likewise in me*; and then you can have no cause of trouble. Or else the first clause may be rendered indicatively, and the latter imperatively; and so our translation renders the words, *Ye do believe in God, believe also in me*; as you believe in God the Creator and Governor of the world, so believe also in me the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. But which way soever the words be rendered, the sense comes all to one; that faith in God, and in our blessed Saviour, are here prescribed as the proper and most powerful remedies against trouble: *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

In the handling of these words I shall do these two things.

First, I shall consider what sort of trouble is here forbidden, or with what reasonable limitations this general prohibition of our Saviour is to be understood, *Let not your heart be troubled.*

Secondly, I shall endeavour to shew what virtue and force there is in the remedy here prescribed by our Saviour, to mitigate and allay our trouble, and to support and quiet our minds under it.

First,

First, We will consider what sort of trouble is here forbidden, and with what due and reasonable limitations we are to understand this general prohibition of our Saviour to his disciples, *Let not your heart be troubled*. And this we shall best find out by considering the various objects of trouble, together with the several causes or grounds of them. And these may all be ranged under these *three heads*; evils past, present, or to come. For the ground of all trouble is some evil, either really and in itself so, or what is apprehended by us under that notion: and the several kinds of trouble, are either the reflection upon evils past, or the sense of an evil that is present, or the fear and apprehension of some future evil which threatens us and hangs over us.

I. For the *First*, The trouble caused by reflection upon evils past, this must either be the evil of affliction or sin. The former of these, when it is past, is seldom any cause of trouble, the remembrance of past sufferings, and the evils which we got over, being rather delightful than grievous, so that it is only the evil of sin, the reflection whereof is troublesome. And this is that which we call *guilt*, which is an inward vexation, and discontent, and grief of mind, arising from the consciousness that we have done amiss, and a fearful apprehension of some vengeance and punishment that will follow it; and there is no trouble that is comparable to this, when the conscience of a sinner is thoroughly awakened.

Now upon this account our hearts ought to be troubled, and we can hardly exceed in it, provided our trouble do not drive us to despair, but to repentance: but there can be no suspicion that this comes within the compass of our Saviour's prohibition.

II. As for the troubles caused by the sense of the present evils, either of loss or suffering, though this do properly enough fall within the compass of our Saviour's prohibition, *Let not your heart be troubled*, yet it admits of several limitations: therefore in order to the fixing of its due and proper bounds, I shall briefly shew, what trouble for present evils and afflictions which are upon us, is not forbidden, and what is.

I. We are not here forbidden to have a just and due sense of any evil or calamity that is upon us; because this is natural, and we cannot help it; for there is a real difference of things in themselves; some things are in their nature good and convenient for us, and agreeable and delightful to our senses; and other things are in themselves evil, that is, naturally displeasing and grievous; and we must not only be *Stoicks*, but even stocks and stones, if we have not a just sense and resentment of this difference. Our blessed Saviour had so; and as he was afflicted more than any man, and suffered more than any of the sons of men, so was he likewise very sensible of his sufferings, and had a natural dread and horror of them; insomuch that he himself tells us, that *his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even to death*, upon the apprehension of what he was to undergo; which made him pray so earnestly, and to repeat that petition so often; *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*. Nay, the very anguish of his mind, caused by the dread and horror of his sufferings, was so great as to force blood through the pores of his body, so that *he sweat as it were thick drops of blood falling upon the ground*.

And this is not to be wondered at, because our blessed Saviour, as he had the greatest endowments of human nature in their greatest perfection, so he had a perfect sense of the evils, and pains and sufferings of it. And all philosophy that will not acknowledge loss and pain, and suffering, to be evils, and troublesome and terrible, is either obstinate fullness, or gross hypocrisy.

2. Nor doth this prohibition of our Saviour exclude natural affection. This is a plant which God himself hath planted in human nature, and that for very excellent ends and purposes; and having made us men, and endowed us with such passions, he does not expect that we should put off our nature, and transform ourselves into another sort of creatures than what we were when we came out of his own hands. To be *without natural affection*, and to have no affective sense of the loss of the nearest relations, is condemned in scripture, as a mark of the greatest degeneracy and depravation of human nature. And therefore we cannot imagine that our Saviour did intend to forbid such a moderate and well-regulated de-

gree of trouble upon these occasions, as is the proper and genuine issue of those natural affections, which God himself hath implanted in us.

3. When our Saviour forbids us to be troubled, he doth not forbid us to have a just sense of God's judgments, or of his hand, in procuring or permitting the evils which befall us; much less of our own sins, which are the meritorious cause of them; nay, on the contrary, he expects that we should acknowledge his providence, and the justness of it, in his severest dealings with us; that we should be *humbled under his mighty hand, and turn to him that smites us, and bear the indignation of the Lord patiently, because we have sinned against him*. Whatever is a sign of God's displeasure against us, is a just and reasonable cause of trouble to us.

But when our Saviour here forbids us to be troubled, he plainly intends to prohibit these three things.

1. Immoderate grief and sorrow for any present affliction or loss, without any restraint upon ourselves, so as to let grief loose, and to give full scope to it, to let the reins fall out of our hands, so that the considerations of reason and religion have no manner of power and command over us; to sorrow, as *Rachel did for her children, refusing to be comforted*. This is unreasonable, and usually of pernicious consequence: for no man knows, when he once abandons himself to melancholy, and gives way to grief, and lets it pierce his heart, and enter into his soul, how it may over-whelm his spirit, and sink it past recovery. And to this pitch the trouble of some men for worldly losses and disappointments, because it was not restrained and governed at first, hath brought them; and it often happens, as *St. Paul* hath observed, *the trouble of the world worketh death*.

I think hardly any man did ever die of grief for his sins, and killed himself by laying them to heart. It is well if our sorrow for sin proceed to that degree, as to work real repentance and amendment. And the reason why our sorrow for sin is commonly moderate and within bounds, is because the sorrow and trouble of repentance is always reasonable, and reason keeps our grief within bounds: but *the sorrow of the world*, that is, of covetous and worldly-minded men, who have unreasonably set their affections upon this world, hath nothing to set bounds and give limits to it. And therefore by the just judgment of God, it sometimes proceeds so far as *to work death*. Many mens hearts have been broken for the loss of an estate, or some great cross and disappointment in their worldly affairs and designs. Thus *Nabal*, upon the very apprehension of the danger that he and his estate were in, and had so narrowly escaped, was struck with grief to the degree of stupidity, so that *his heart died within him, and he became as a stone*; and in a few days he died of that grief.

2. We are not to be troubled for present afflictions and sufferings to the degree of impatience and discontent, so as to fret and murmur in our hearts against God, and *to charge him foolishly*, as if he dealt hardly with us, and had not a due regard for us, and an equal consideration of our case. For we are all sinners, and always deserve to suffer; and therefore whatever temporal evils befall the best men in this world, they are always *less than their iniquities have deserved*: and yet men are very prone to censure and find fault with God, for the evils and calamities which they draw down upon themselves. So *Solomon* observes, *Prov. xix. 3. The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord*. We suffer for our own sins and follies, and then are angry with God because we suffer. God is angry with us for our sins, and when he is angry with us, and *lifts up his hand against us*, it becomes us *to humble ourselves under his mighty hand*; for *who can stand before him when once he is angry?* But we have no cause to fret against him, for the evils which we bring upon ourselves: besides that fretting is not the way to relieve and ease us, but to vex and gall us the more.

3. As to the fear and apprehension of future evils, though we ought to have a just sense of them, yet we ought not to be dejected and troubled for them to the degree of despondency, so as to conclude ourselves miserable and forsaken, utterly lost and undone, and that our case is past all help and remedy: we should not be so dejected, as if we were destitute of all comfort; and utterly without hope. Hope
lies

lies at the bottom of the worst condition ; for while we are not *without God*, we can never be *without hope* ; so long as the government of the world is in so good hands, our case can never be desperate ; and therefore we ought to rebuke the despondency of our spirits, as *David* did, *Psal. xliii. 5. Why art thou so cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope in God.* And we should support ourselves in the greatest dangers and fears as he did, *Psal. iii, 1, 2, 3. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me ? how many are they that rise up against me ? Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of my head.*

And this cause of trouble upon the fear and apprehension of future evils, was the case of the disciples, who were mightily dejected and disturbed, upon the apprehension of the destitute condition they should be in upon our Saviour's departure from them ; that they should be exposed to a malicious world, without all manner of protection from those innumerable evils and dangers which threatened them. And this I shall have most particular respect to in my following discourse, as being more particularly intended by our Saviour, and being one of the most common causes of trouble in this world. I proceed therefore in the

Second place to consider, what force there is in the remedy here prescribed by our Saviour, to mitigate and allay our troubles, both in respect of our present evils and sufferings, and the danger and apprehension of future evils, and to support and comfort our minds under them. *Let not your heart be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

In which words our Saviour prescribes a double remedy against trouble.

First, Faith in God, the great Creator and wise Governor of the world. *Ye believe in God*, or, *Believe ye in God*, to which he adds in the

Second place, faith likewise in himself, the Son of God, and the Saviour of men. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.* Not as if faith in God were not a sufficient ground of consolation and support to our minds, but to acquaint us, that a firm faith in him who is the Son of God and Saviour of the world, would very much tend to confirm and strengthen our trust and confidence in God ; as will clearly appear, when I come to shew what peculiar consideration of comfort and support the christian religion offers to us, beyond what the common light and reason of mankind, from the considerations of the divine nature and perfections, does suggest to us. And to explain the full strength and force of these *two* considerations, I shall do these *two* things.

First, I shall endeavour to shew, what considerations of comfort and support the belief of a God, and the natural notions and acknowledgments of mankind concerning him, do afford to good men, for the allaying and mitigating of their fears and troubles. And,

Secondly, What farther considerations faith in Christ, and the firm belief of the christian religion, do afford to this purpose. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

First, To shew, what considerations of comfort and support the belief of a God, and the natural notions and acknowledgments of mankind concerning him, do afford to good men, for the allaying and mitigating of their fears and troubles ; which I shall briefly deduce thus.

The firm belief and persuasion of a God, does necessarily infer the belief of his infinite power, and wisdom, and holiness, and goodness ; for these are necessary and essential perfections of the divine nature, without which we cannot conceive such a being as God is. Now from these essential perfections of the divine nature, these *two* principles do naturally result.

I. That his providence governs the world, and administers the affairs of it, particularly of mankind, with great goodness and wisdom.

II. That his providence is more peculiarly concerned for good men, and that he hath a very tender and particular care of them, and regard to them.

Now these *two* principles, concerning which I have discoursed at large upon another occasion, * afford us this *fourfold* ground of comfort, under all the evils that we labour under, and are afraid of.

I. If God govern the world, then we and all our interests and concernments are certainly in the best and safest hands ; and where, if we knew how to wish well

† See this
matter al-
so handled
at large
in the same
sermon.

and wisely for ourselves, we should desire to have them; and therefore why should our hearts be troubled at any thing that doth or can befall us? †

II. Another ground of comfort is, That if the providence of God have a particular regard to good men, and favour for them, then we may be assured, that if we be careful of our duty to God, and rely upon his goodness, and refer ourselves to his pleasure, in the final issue and result of things, all shall turn to our good, and conspire in our happiness: nay, if we make the best use of the evils and afflictions which befall us, and bear them as we ought, we ourselves may do a great deal to turn them to our benefit and advantage; to the bettering of our minds, and the improvement of our virtues, and the increase of our reward. And why should we be troubled so much at things which may prove so many ways beneficial to us, if it be not our own fault? which tend to our good, and will end in it, if we will but let patience have its perfect work, as St. James shews, Chap. v. 11. in the instance of Job, whose admirable patience had a glorious end and reward, even in this world; You have heard, says he, of the patience of Job, and of the end God made with him; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy. Job upon a dunghill, is no whit inferior to the most glorious prince that ever sat upon a throne. Some Men have been more illustrious, and according to the true rate and value of things, more considerable for their patience and courage, and constancy of mind in great afflictions and sufferings, than the greatest pomp and prosperity in the world could possibly have made them. Some have borne poverty, and sickness, and reproach, and persecution, and exquisite pain and torments, with so much decency, with such greatness of mind, and firmness of resolution, as might justly provoke the envy of the greatest and wealthiest, and to all outward appearance, the happiest persons that ever were in the world. M. Antoninus was an excellent good man, and perhaps the greatest emperor that ever was, for in his time the Roman empire was at its greatest extent; and yet it is hard to say, whether Epictetus, whose example I proposed before, and who lived about the same time with this great and good emperor, I say, it is not easy to say, whether this poor man Epictetus, who was deprest into the lowest and most afflicted condition, that human nature is almost capable of, were not, by reason of those admirable virtues which shined so brightly in that dark and dismal condition, his invincible patience, his perfect submission to the providence of God, the perpetual cheerfulness and serenity, the unmoveable constancy and equality of his mind, according to a right estimation of things, the greater and more glorious person of the two.

So that good men are always secure, as to the main and the essentials of happiness; under all outward afflictions and sufferings of the body, they may still retain a wise and virtuous mind, which is *that good part which cannot be taken from them*; and if they retain that, they are sure of the favour of God, and the countenance of heaven, which alone is sufficient to make any condition happy.

III. Another ground of comfort is, That if God govern the world, he can either prevent or divert the greatest evils that threaten us, or if they come upon us, he can support us under them, and deliver us out of them: and if we be good, and it be for our good, he will do one of these for us; either he will prevent the evil, that it shall not come, if that be best for us; or if the affliction fall heavy upon us, he will support us under it; and if our strength be increased in proportion to the weight of our burthen, it is as well as if we had escaped it, nay perhaps much better, considering the benefit and reward of it. But how grievous soever it be, he can, when he pleaseth, deliver us from it; and he will do it presently if it be for our good; and if it be not, it is not really desirable to us to be so soon freed from it.

IV. And lastly, which is consequent upon the former particulars, it is certain upon the whole matter, and upon the ballancing of all accounts, that in every condition good men have much more cause of comfort and joy, than of dejection and trouble. Let our fears be as great, and our present sufferings as heavy as they can, there are considerations of so great moment to be put into the other scale, as will infinitely out-weigh them, and make them seem light. The consideration of our immortal duration in a future state, and of the endless and unspeakable happiness of another world, are of that solidity and weight, that *these light afflictions*, as the

the apostle calls them, *which are but for a moment, are in no wise worthy to be compared with them.*

What though our passage through this world be never so stormy and tempestuous, we shall at last arrive at a safe port. Heaven is a sure sanctuary and retreat from all the evils and afflictions which we are liable to, and which many times pursue us so close in this mortal state. It is but exercising our faith and patience for a very little while, and all will be well with us; much better than if we had never been afflicted, and had been wholly exempted from all sorts of sufferings in this world. We have no pretence to *the crown of life*, if we do not *overcome*; and there can be no *conquest* without some *conflict*.

But because the christian religion does give us the greatest, if not the only firm assurance of the happiness of another life, which, when all is done, is the great support and cordial of our fainting spirits, under the troubles and afflictions of this life, therefore I shall not now enlarge farther upon it, but refer it to the *second* head of my discourse, which I proposed to speak to in the next place, *viz.* What farther considerations of comfort and support, faith in Christ, and the firm belief of the christian religion does afford to good men for the allaying and mitigating of their fears and troubles. *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.* But this I shall refer to some other opportunity.

S E R M O N CLXII.

The true Remedy against the Troubles of Life.

J O H N xiv. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

I Have considered these words as an universal remedy against trouble: and in shewing what virtue and force there is in this remedy, I have considered, *The second Sermon on this Text.*
First, That faith in God is a proper and most powerful means to mitigate and allay our trouble, and to support and quiet our minds under it.

I now proceed in the *second* place to shew what farther considerations of comfort and support, faith in Christ, and the firm belief of the christian religion do afford good men, for the allaying and mitigating of their greatest fears and troubles. *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.* I shall mention these *five*.

I. Faith in Christ, or the belief of the christian religion, gives us full and perfect assurance of immortality, and of the glorious and eternal rewards of another world.

II. It promiseth to every sincere christian the inward assistance, and support, and comfort of God's holy Spirit, to bear up the weakness of human nature under its heaviest pressures of fear, or grief, or pain.

III. It assures us of the special efficacy of our prayers with God, either for our deliverance from trouble, or for the aids and supports of his grace under it.

IV. It propounds to us the best and most admirable pattern that ever was, of patience and constancy of mind under the apprehension of approaching evils, or the sense of present sufferings; and of a contented and chearful submission to the will of God, in the saddest condition to which human nature is incident.

V. It

V. It assures us of a most compassionate, and prevalent, and perpetual Patron, and Advocate, and Intercessor with God for us.

I. Faith in Christ, or the doctrine of the christian religion, gives a full and perfect assurance of immortality, and of the glorious and eternal rewards of another world. Of this the world was very doubtful and uncertain before, and had but obscure and wavering apprehensions about it. And though the generality of mankind had naturally some glimmering apprehensions of another life after this, and secret hopes and expectations of a future reward for good men that were hardly used in this world; yet the philosophers had wrangled and disputed the matter into so much uncertainty, that mankind was very much staggered about it, and the doubts and difficulties that were raised about it did very much break the force, and weaken the influence of so weighty a consideration.

Thus it was among the *Gentiles*. And under the law of *Moses*, though the *Jews* had such apprehensions of their own immortality, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, as natural light suggested to them; yet that covenant and dispensation added but very little to the clearing of those notions, and the strengthening of this persuasion in the minds of men; it did rather suppose it, than add any new strength and force to it: for under that dispensation the eyes of men were generally fixed upon temporal promises and threatenings: though as the times of the *Messias* grew nearer, and the sufferings of that people sharper, they began to have clearer apprehensions of a resurrection to another and better life; it being natural to men when they are destitute of present comfort, to cherish and make much of the future hopes of a better condition.

And therefore we find that the people of the *Jews*, when they had been long exercised with great afflictions, began to comfort and support themselves with the hopes of a blessed resurrection to a better life; as is evident from the history of the seven brethren in the *Maccabees*, who with great patience and courage bore up under the most exquisite torments, in confidence of being raised again to a blessed state in another world. And of these it is the apostle certainly speaks, *Heb. xi. 35.* when he says, *that some were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.*

But the apostle tells us expressly, *2 Tim. i. 10.* that the clear and certain discovery of a future state is owing to the christian religion, and *made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ; who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.* Not only natural light, but all the revelations which God had made to the world before, had this weakness and imperfection in them, that they did not give men the clear discovery and full assurance of another life; and consequently had but little efficacy in comparison to engage men to their duty, or to support and comfort them under their sufferings: and therefore the apostle to the *Hebrews* calls the gospel, in opposition to the law, *the power of an endless life*, *Heb. vii. 16.* intimating to us, how great a force and influence the clear apprehensions of another life are apt to have upon the minds of men. For which reason the same apostle tells us, *ver. 18, 19.* that the law was too weak to raise men to the perfection of virtue and goodness, because it did not work strongly enough upon the hopes of men, by the greatness and clearness of its promises; and that for this weakness it was removed, and a more powerful and awakening dispensation brought in the place of it: *For verily, says he, there is an annulling of the commandment going before, meaning the law of Moses, which by the gospel was abrogated and made void, for the weakness and unprofitableness of it; for the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did.* For which reason, *Chap. viii. 6.* he calls the covenant of the gospel, *a better covenant*, because it was established upon better promises, viz. *the promise of an eternal inheritance*, as the same apostle speaks, *Chap. ix. 15.* All the express promises of the law were only of temporal good things, but the promises of the gospel are of eternal life and happiness: *This is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life*, says St. *John*, *1 John ii. 25.*

Now the firm persuasion of another life, does not only answer that great difficulty and objection against the providence of God, from the seeming injustice and inequality of his dealings with good and bad men in this world, because the eternal rewards and punishments of another world will set all things straight, and
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make abundant amends to good men, for all their sufferings and afflictions here; and will render the past prosperity of bad men one of the greatest aggravations of their misery: as it is said of *Babylon*, Rev. xviii. 7. *How much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her.* In like manner God will deal with wicked men in another world; their torments shall rise in proportion to the pleasure and prosperity they have enjoyed and abused in this world. This remarkable change of condition which shall befall good and bad men in another world, is set forth to us in a very lively and affecting manner in the parable of the rich man and *Lazarus*, Luke xvi. 25. where *Abraham* is represented speaking thus to the rich man, *Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. He is comforted* in proportion to his sufferings in this world: *and thou art tormented* in proportion to the sensual pleasures and luxuries of thy former life. Men under great want and sufferings, are apt to think their lot in this world very hard, and yet upon the whole matter, and taking all things into consideration, who would not much rather chuse to be *Lazarus* with his hard fortune in this world, and everlasting consolation in the other; than the rich man drowned in pleasure in this world, and tormented in flames in the other? I say, the firm belief of another life, does not only answer this objection against the divine providence; but does likewise minister abundant comfort and matter of joy to good men, under all their fears and troubles in this world. Nay, this consideration alone of a blessed immortality in another world, of which only the christian religion hath given us full and undoubted assurance, is of that weight and moment, as to contribute more to the support of our spirits under the evils and calamities of this life, than all the considerations of philosophy put together. They are many of them pleasant and pretty, and fit enough to entertain and divert a man's mind under a slight trouble; but they are too speculative and refined for common capacities, too thin and weak to bear any great stress, and to support and relieve a man's mind under a sore and heavy affliction: but this is a consideration which hath strength and substance in it, that all things will end in our unspeakable happiness, and that this happiness shall have no end. This the apostle *St. Paul* speaks of as a proper consideration of comfort, of which we are assured by the christian religion, that all the evils of this life, shall in the last issue and result of things co-operate to our happiness, *Rom. viii. 28. We know, says he, that all things work together for good to them that love God.* And *2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18. For which cause we faint not, &c.* The apostle gives us an account, how they were afflicted and persecuted, and what it was that supported them under all their sufferings, *ver. 8, 9, 10, 11. We are troubled on every side; yet not distressed: we are perplexed; but not in despair: persecuted; but not forsaken: cast down; but not destroyed. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus's sake.* And then he tells us what it was kept up the spirits of christians under these sharp sufferings, *viz. the assurance which the christian religion gives us of a resurrection to a better and happier life, ver. 14. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus.* And then it follows, *ver. 16. For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day; that is, though our bodies be wasted and weakened, yet every day we grow stronger in the resolution of our minds, because our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.* And then at the beginning of the next Chap. he still urgeth the same consideration of comfort, that so soon as we pass out of the troubles of this life, we shall enter upon the happiness of the other. *For we know, that is, we christians are assured, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* Here you see is the great ground of their confidence and comfort in the worst condition, and under the most grievous persecutions which they were continually exposed to.

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And therefore our Saviour and his apostles make no scruple to pronounce those persons *blessed*, who in respect of their sufferings seemed to be of all men in the world the most miserable; and they pronounce them *happy*, upon this very account of their sufferings. *Matth. v. 10, 11, 12. Blessed are they, says our Saviour, which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.* Great sufferings for God in this world, do entitle us, by virtue of this gracious promise of our Lord, to a glorious reward in the other. So likewise St. James exhorts christians to rejoice in their sufferings, *James i. 2. My brethren, account it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations.* And *Chap. v. 11. Behold, says he, we count them happy which endure.* And St. Peter to the same purpose, *1 Pet. iv. 14. If ye be persecuted for righteousness sake, happy are ye.* So solid a comfort to men under all the troubles and afflictions of this world, is that firm assurance which the christian religion gives us of a future happiness, as to bring even the greatest miseries which in this life we are liable to, in some sense under the notion of *blessedness*.

And this was not only fine talk, like the glorious brags of the *Stoicks*; but the primitive christians, in infinite examples, gave the real proof and evidence of it, in their constant and chearful behaviour under the most cruel and intolerable torments. *Non magna loquimur, sed vivimus, says Tertul. in the name of the christians: We do not talk great things, but do them; and demonstrate the real effect of our words and profession in our lives and actions.* Never did the arguments fetched from another world, and the assurance of a blessed immortality, display their force and virtue more, than in the joyful sufferings of the first christians, and their generous contempt of all that was dear to them in this world, *in hope of that eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised; and which the Son of God had insured to them, by his resurrection from the dead.*

II. The christian religion promiseth to every sincere christian, the inward assistance and support and comfort of God's holy Spirit, to bear up the weakness of human nature under its heaviest pressures of fear or sufferings. And this is peculiar to the christian religion: for though the providence of God did take particular care of good men in all ages, and he did always in some good measure assist them to do their duty, and afford comfort and support to them under great trials and sufferings; yet God never made so express and general a promise of this to all good men, as he hath done by the christian religion. Never was so constant a presence and influence of the Divine Spirit vouchsafed and assured to men under any dispensation, as that of the gospel, wherein the Spirit of God is promised to all that sincerely embrace the christian religion, to reside and dwell in them, not only to all the purposes of sanctification and holiness; but of support and comfort under all troubles and sufferings; for which reason the gospel is called *the ministration of the Spirit*, and is upon this account said to be *more glorious* than any other revelation which God had ever made to mankind. And therefore this is said to be essential to every christian, to have the Spirit of God dwell in him. *Rom. viii. 9, 10. speaking of all true christians, Ye are, saith St. Paul, not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* So that every sincere christian is made partaker of the promise of the spirit through faith; that is, by his belief of the christian religion, he is under the immediate conduct and influence of God's holy Spirit, and hath this blessed Guide and Comforter always present with him, nay continually dwelling and residing in him, if we do not grieve and quench and drive him away from us by our ill treatment of him, and resistance of his blessed motions.

And this promise of the Spirit, our Saviour had a very particular respect to, when he prescribes faith in himself as a special remedy against that trouble which possesseth their minds, upon the apprehension of his departure from them; and therefore he tells them so often, that when he was gone from them, he would send them *another Comforter or Advocate*, who should undertake their cause, and would stand by them in their greatest troubles and temptations. He tells them, that he himself would be an Advocate for them in heaven: but because that was

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at a great distance, and might not be so sensible a comfort to them, he promiseth to send them *another Advocate*, that should be present with them here on earth, and upon all occasions undertake their patronage and defence. So that all things considered, he assures them there was so little reason to be troubled at his departure from them, that they had cause rather to be glad of it, because it would turn to their great advantage; and instead of the benefit of his outward teaching and presence, they should have the inward presence and teaching of his Spirit, and the continual aids and supports of his grace. *I go my way*, says he, *John xvi. 5, 6, 7. I go my way to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? but because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you, that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* And so the evangelist tells us before, *Chap. vii. 39. That the Spirit was not to be given, till Jesus was first glorified.* This, says he, spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified; plainly declaring, that according to the wise dispensation of God, it was so ordered, that the sending of the Holy Ghost for the propagating of the gospel, by those miraculous powers which were to be conferred upon the first publishers of it, and for the supporting and comforting of christians under the sharp trials and sufferings to which they were to be exposed, was the fruit of Christ's ascension into heaven, and his sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and the first boon which he should obtain of his Father, by the virtue and power of his intercession. *I will pray the Father*, says he, *ver. 16. of this chapter, and he shall send you another Advocate, the Spirit of truth, and he shall abide with you for ever. He shall send you another Comforter*; so our translation renders the word *παράκλητος*, but it most properly signifies an *Advocate or Patron*, that undertakes our defence and pleads our cause for us. And this the Holy Ghost in a most eminent and remarkable manner was to the apostles and first christians, when they were called to answer for themselves before kings and governors. They were generally men of low condition and mean breeding, easily dash'd out of countenance before great men; and therefore our Saviour promised that the Holy Ghost should be their *Advocate*, and should prompt and assist them in the pleading of their cause. *Mat. x. 18, 19. Ye shall be brought before governors, and kings, for my sake; but when they deliver you up, take no thought how, or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak: for it is not you that speak; but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.* Or as it is in *St. Luke, Chap. xii. ver. 12. The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.* And yet more fully, *Chap. xxi. ver. 12, 14, 15. where speaking again of their being brought before kings and rulers for his name's sake, he gives them this charge, Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, or resist.*

And this promise we find remarkably made good to *St. Stephen, Acts vi. 10. of whom it is there said, that his enemies were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.* And to *St. Paul* likewise, when he was first called to answer for himself at Rome, as he himself tells *Timothy, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17. At my first answer no man stood with me; but all men forsook me: notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me.*

And though this was extraordinary, yet all christians have, by virtue of this promise, the ordinary assistance and comfort of God's Holy Spirit in all their troubles and afflictions. By this Spirit we may in all our distresses with confidence make our addresses to God, *having access by one Spirit to the Father*, as *St. Paul* speaks, *Ephes. ii. 18.* By the same Spirit we are assisted in our prayers, and directed many times what to ask of God, suitable to the condition which his providence designs to bring us into; which seems to be the apostle's meaning, *Rom. viii. 26. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us; that is, suggests to us such requests, as are fit for us to put up to God.* By the same Spirit is secretly infused into our Souls, *peace and joy in believing, great consolation and good hope through grace.* Hence are those expressions in scripture of the consolation

tion of the Spirit, and of joy in the Holy Ghost, the best cordial in the world in all cases of trouble.

And in extraordinary cases, good men, by virtue of this promise of the Spirit, may expect to be borne up and comforted in a very extraordinary and supernatural manner, under the greatest tribulations and sufferings *for righteousness sake*. This was very signal and remarkable in the primitive christians, who were exposed to the most fierce and cruel persecutions; and may still be expected in like cases of extraordinary suffering for the testimony of God's truth. *If ye be reproached, saith St. Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 14. for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.* The Spirit of God is there promised, to strengthen and support all that suffer for the name of Christ, in a very conspicuous and glorious manner; according to that prayer of St. Paul, Col. i. 11. that christians might be *strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all long-suffering with joyfulness*. For when God exerciseth good men with trials more than human, and sufferings which are beyond the ordinary rate of human strength and patience to bear, he hath engaged himself to assist and endow them with more than human courage and resolution. So St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*, who had not yet felt the utmost rage of persecution, 1 Cor. x. 13. *No temptation, or trial, hath yet befallen you, but what is common to men; nothing but what is frequently incident to human nature, and what by an ordinary assistance of God's grace men may grapple with; but in case God calls men to extraordinary sufferings, He is faithful that hath promised, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* And why should we be daunted at the weight of an affliction, if we be well assured that our strength shall be increased in proportion to our burden?

And where-ever this promise is not made good, there is some defect on our part; either men are not sincere in the profession of the truth, and then no wonder if they fall for fear of suffering; or they have been too confident of themselves, and have not with that earnestness and importunity they ought, prayed to God for his grace and assistance, and thereupon God hath justly left them to try their strength against a violent and powerful temptation: as he did *Peter*, who for all his confidence, did upon no very great temptation deny his Saviour; but even in this case, where there is truth and sincerity at the bottom, God gives to such persons, as he did to *Peter*, the opportunity of recovering themselves by repentance.

There are *three* particulars more remain, but I shall proceed no farther at this time.

S E R M O N CLXIII.

The true Remedy against the Troubles of Life.

J O H N xiv. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God; believe also in me.

*The third
Sermon on
this Text.*

FROM these words I proposed to shew, what force and virtue there is in the remedy proposed by our Saviour, to mitigate and allay our troubles; and I told you, that our Saviour here prescribes a double remedy.

First, Faith in God, the great Creator and Governor of the world.

Secondly, Faith in himself, the Son of God and Saviour of Men. I have spoken to the *first*, and have likewise entered upon the

Second,

Second, And here I propounded to shew, what farther considerations of comfort and support, faith in Christ, and the firm belief of the christian religion do afford to good men, for the allaying and mitigating of their greatest fears and troubles. And I mentioned *five*.

I. Faith in Christ gives us full assurance of immortality, and the rewards of another world.

II. It promiseth to every sincere christian the inward assistance and support of God's holy Spirit. Thus far I have gone. I now proceed,

III. It assures us of the special efficacy of our prayers with God, either for our deliverance from trouble, or for the aids and supports of his grace under it.

Now concerning the great efficacy of our prayers with God, there are several very particular and remarkable promises and declarations in the new testament. *Matt. vii. 7. Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Matth. xxi. 22. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. John xv. 7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* But then he directs us to put up our petitions to God in his name, as the way to make them prevalent, *John xiv. 13, 14. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. And Chap. xvi. 23, 24. he repeats this promise again for their support and comfort under the tribulations which they should endure. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. And again, ver. 26, 27. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you.* He assures them of God's merciful inclination towards them; and if it would add any thing to their comfortable assurance of having their prayers heard, he could have told them, *that he would pray the Father for them.* St. James particularly comforts the christians under their trials upon this consideration, that God is ready to give wisdom and strength to demean ourselves as we ought under sufferings, if we heartily beg it of him, *James i. 2, 3, 4, 5. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience: but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* And since this requires great wisdom, to bear great afflictions with patience, therefore he adds, that God is always ready to grant this wisdom and grace to those that heartily beg it of him. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 1 John iii. 22. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight. And Chap. v. 14, 15. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that is, we christians: for he had said before, These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God; and then it follows, And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him; that is, though we have not presently the thing we prayed for, yet we are as sure of it as if we had it.* The earnest prayer of every sincere christian, is very powerful and available with God. So St. James assures us, *Chap. v. 16. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much: Much more the united prayers of the faithful.* So our Saviour declares, *Matth. xviii. 19. Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching the thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

All these promises and declarations do certainly signify a more special efficacy and prevalency of the prayers of christians. And though there was a miraculous power of prayer in the primitive times, which is now ceased, and of which St. James plainly speaks, *Chap. v. 14, 15. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.* Yet it is certain that these promises extend farther, to the efficacy

cy of the prayers of the faithful in such cases. And so our Saviour extends this promise, *Matth. xxi. 22.* for after he had said in the verse before, *Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree; but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done.* After this he immediately subjoins, *And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* Hereby declaring that the efficacy of the prayers of christians was not limited only to those miraculous effects, which were but to continue for a time, but that this promise was to be extended to the prayers of the faithful in all cases, and all times.

And indeed all the grounds and reasons of the efficacy and prevalency of our prayers, which are mentioned in the new testament, do equally concern christians in all times; as that we pray to God in the name and mediation of *Jesus Christ*, upon which our Saviour very frequently, when he makes this promise, lays great stress, and seems to render it as the reason of the special efficacy of our prayers. *John xiv. 13, 14.* *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name I will do it.* And *Chap. xvi. 23, 24.* *Verily verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Heretofore ye have asked nothing in my name, ask and ye shall receive.*

Another reason of the acceptance and prevalency of our prayers, is, that the Spirit of God which dwells in all true christians does help our weakness, and secretly directs us to ask of God those things which are according to his will, and does as it were intercede for us. *Rom. viii. 26.* *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we shall pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.* And *ver. 27.* *And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.* And no wonder if those petitions are very prevalent, which we are assisted and directed to put up to God, according to his will.

And this certainly is a great comfort under any trouble, that we can have free access to God by prayer, in confidence that he will grant us those requests which we put up to him according to his will. And this the apostle to the *Hebrews* mentions more than once, as an argument to them to continue stedfast in the profession of their religion, notwithstanding the persecution that attended it, because we may at all times address ourselves to God in confidence of his gracious help and assistance, *Heb. iv. 16.* After he had exhorted them to hold fast their profession, as an encouragement thereto, he adds the free access we may have to God for his help and support: *Let us therefore, says he, come boldly, or with great freedom and confidence, to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find favour with him for our seasonable help and succour.* And to the same purpose, *Chap. x. 19, 20.* *Having therefore freedom to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, that is, having access to God in prayer by Jesus Christ; Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, that is, in perfect confidence that our prayers will be graciously heard and answered; upon which he adds, Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that hath promised: if we continue stedfast to God, and the profession of his truth, he will make good all that he hath promised, both of present support under our sufferings, and of the glorious reward of them in another life: he will hear our prayers, and grant us the aids and supplies of his grace as we stand in need of them.*

IV. The christian religion propounds to us, the best and most admirable pattern that ever was of patience and constancy of mind under the apprehension of approaching evils, or the sense of our present sufferings, and of a contented and cheerful submission to the will of God in the saddest condition to which human nature is incident: and that is the pattern of our blessed Saviour, who for this reason among others, was so great a sufferer in so many kinds, that he might go before us in this rough and difficult way, and leave us an example that we should follow his steps; that we might learn from him how to calm and quiet our spirits, to appease and hush the tumults of our passions, under the severest dispensations of God's providence towards us, and to bend our wills to a patient submission to the will of our heavenly Father, under the sorest afflictions and sharpest sufferings. For though our blessed

bleſſed Saviour prayed ſo earneſtly to his Father, that *that bitter cup might paſs from him*, yet how quietly and chearfully did he reſign and yield up himſelf to the will of God, ſaying, *Yet not my will; but thine be done!* Human nature ſhrunk and gave back at the ſight of his dreadful ſufferings: but his reaſon over-ruled the inclinations of nature, and kept him to a ſteady reſolution of ſubmitting to the will of God. And therefore when Peter attempted his reſcue, he commanded him to deſiſt, ſaying, *Put up thy ſword into the ſheath: the cup which my Father hath given, ſhall I not drink it?* John xviii. 11. And though he had as quick a ſenſe of ſuffering as any man, yet with what *patience did he poſſeſs his ſoul!* with what meekneſs and humility of ſpirit did he bear and yield to it! *He was led as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before the ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth. When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatened not: but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.* And thus it became the captain of our ſalvation, that he might be a perfect pattern to us of patience and ſubmiſſion to the will of God, of a meek and undiſturbed mind, under the greateſt bodily pains, and the extreme anguiſh of his ſoul, *to be made perfect by ſufferings.*

So that under the greateſt preſent evils, or the moſt fearful apprehenſion of future evil and ſuffering, we ſhould fix our eye ſtedfaſtly upon this great and glorious example of patience and conſtancy and meekneſs, of a due ſenſe, and yet of a moſt decent behaviour under the heaviest load of affliction, that ever was laid upon any of the ſons of men; Looking, as the apoſtle exhorts, Heb. xii. 2, 3. *Looking unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of our faith; who for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame; and conſidering him, who endured ſuch contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf, leſt we be weary and faint in our minds.*

And ſurely if we would but let our minds dwell a while upon this conſideration of the ſufferings of the Son of God, and his great meekneſs and patience, and ſubmiſſion to the will of God under them, it would mightily conduce to the mitigating of our trouble, and bringing us to *poſſeſs our ſouls in patience*, in the ſaddeſt condition that can befall us.

And what conſideration more proper for us than this, when we are going to receive the bleſſed Sacrament, wherein the ſufferings of the Son of God are repreſented to us, in the ſymbols of his body broken, and his blood ſhed for the remiſſion of our ſins? and there are many conſiderations which this ſight is apt to ſuggeſt to us, which are ſo many powerful arguments to quiet and comfort our minds under the greateſt troubles and ſufferings which we are liable to; ſuch as theſe.

1 The grievous ſufferings which the ſon of God was expoſed to, do clearly ſhew us, that the good things of this life are not ſo valuable, nor the evils and ſufferings of it ſo conſiderable as we are apt to fancy and imagine; when the beſt man that ever lived, was ſo deſtitute of the common comforts and conveniences of human life, and had ſo large a ſhare of the calamities and ſufferings of it. If we could but rectify our opinion of things, it would go a great way in making any of the evils and afflictions of this life tolerable. If God ſee good to reduce us to poverty and want, let us think of him, who *being Lord of all, had not where to lay his head; who being rich, for our ſakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.* To be deſtitute of worldly accommodations cannot ſeem ſo diſmal and deſpicable a ſight, when we conſider whoſe lot it was to live in a low and indigent condition; the very conſideration whereof doth not only make poverty tolerable, but even glorious.

So likewiſe when we are *perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake*, and exerciſed with ſufferings and reproaches; when we are ready to be diſcouraged in well-doing by the oppoſition we meet withal from the ingratitude of men, and the malicious interpretation of our good actions, perverting the beſt things, done with the beſt mind and to the beſt end, to ſome ill purpoſe and deſign; let us *look to Jeſus, and conſider him who endured ſuch contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf*, and this will help to abate the hideous apprehenſion of theſe things.

2. The ſufferings of the Son of God are a demonſtration to us, that the love and favour of God, wherein the chief happineſs of man conſiſts, are not to be eſtimated and meaſured by outward proſperity in this world; much leſs can it be concluded from temporal afflictions and ſufferings, that God hath no favour and
kindneſs

kindness for those whom he thinks fit to exercise with them. For we see plainly by this instance of the grievous sufferings of his Son, that God may most deeply wound and afflict those whom he most dearly loves; and if we can be secure of the favour of God, and his loving-kindness, why should *our hearts be troubled and dismayed at the apprehension of any evil that can befall us?*

God may love his children, and yet chasten them very severely: nay, that he does so, is rather an argument that they are his children, and that he loves them, and is concerned for them. So I am sure the apostle teacheth us to argue, *Heb. xii. 6, 7, 8. For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons.* The heaviest and most grievous load of sufferings that was ever laid on any man, God permitted to be laid on his only begotten Son, the dearly beloved of his soul, in whom he was well-pleased. The greater our afflictions are, and the more we suffer for righteousness sake, so much the liker are we to the Son of God, and so much the more likely to be the sons and children of God. 'Tis true, as the apostle tells us, that *no affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous*: but surely it is a great mitigation of it, to consider what a glorious example and argument of patience our religion proposeth to us, for our encouragement under sufferings: that the best man that ever was, lived in the most afflicted condition; and the greatest sufferer, that ever was, or can be, was the dearly beloved Son of God.

3. In the victorious sufferings of the Son of God, we see the world conquered to our hand, all the terrors and temptations of it disarmed, and all its force baffled and broken. This consideration our Saviour makes use of to support the faint spirits of his disciples, under the melancholy apprehensions which they had of sufferings, *John xvi. 33. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* The great work is done to our hands; affliction and death are vanquish'd and overcome by him. That conquest which the Captain of our salvation hath already made of all the powers of darkness, renders our victory over them cheap and easy.

4. The temptations and sufferings of our Lord were greater than ours are or can be; for he bore the heavy and insupportable load of all the sins of all mankind, and of the wrath and vengeance due to them. *The Lord hath laid on him, saith the prophet, Isa. liii. 6, 7. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all; he was oppressed and afflicted.* And well might he be oppressed with affliction, who had such an intolerable burthen as the sins of all mankind to press him down. That passage is commonly applied to him, and well might he cry out in that manner, *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.* Such were the sufferings of our Lord, so great and so grievous, as none of us are in any degree able to undergo. That weight under which he crouched, would crush us; that which he was hardly able to sustain, would certainly sink us; and do we complain and faint in our minds, when but a very little part of the punishment due to us only for our own sins is inflicted upon us? The consideration of the heavy and unknown sufferings of the Son of God, should make all our afflictions not only tolerable, but light.

5. And yet we have in effect the same support that he had. We are apt to be very much disheartened and discouraged at the apprehension of sufferings, from the consideration of our own weakness and frailty; *but the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, and the same glorious power that raised up Jesus from the dead, works mightily on them that believe.* St. Paul useth very high expressions in this matter, *Ephes. i. 29, 30. That ye may know, says he, speaking in general of all christians, what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him on his own right hand.* So that every sincere christian is endowed with a kind of omnipotency, being able, as St. Paul says of himself, *to do all things through Christ strengthening him.* We are of ourselves very weak, and the temptations and terrors of the world are very powerful

ful; but there is a principle residing in every true christian, that is able to bear us up against the world and the power of all its temptations. *Whatsoever is born of God, says St. John, overcometh the world: for greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The holy Spirit of God which dwells in all true christians, is a more powerful principle of resolution and courage and patience, under the sharpest trials and sufferings, than that evil Spirit which rules in the world is to stir up and set on the malice and rage of the world against us. *Ye are of God, and have overcome the world: for greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

6. Let us consider farther, for whom and for what our blessed Lord suffered. Not for himself; but for our sake: not for any fault of his own; for *he had no sin*; but for our sins. He was perfectly innocent: but we are great and grievous offenders. We suffer upon our own account: but he only for our sakes, and for our salvation. So that the example of our Lord's sufferings hath an irresistible force and virtue in it, to argue us into patience and submission. Did he bear the load of our sins so willingly? did he *who had no sin* suffer so patiently, to free us from eternal sufferings? And shall we who are guilty think much to bear a small part of that burden, which he so cheerfully underwent for us, and which falls so much short of the due punishment of our faults? The penitent thief upon the cross urged the equity and force of this argument to patience, to his fellow-criminal, that they who had been guilty of such great crimes, and were justly condemned for them, ought to be patient under their sufferings. *We indeed, says he, are justly condemned; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.*

7. And lastly, If we consider the transcendent excellency and dignity of the person, who underwent so great sufferings with so much meekness and patience, and with so even and undisturbed a mind, this will calm and allay our passions, and mitigate the troubles which befall us pitiful and inconsiderable creatures, in comparison of this *Prince of glory* and *Heir of everlasting bliss*. When we consider the meekness of this excellent person, *the eternal Son of God*, and with what submission and serenity of mind he demeaned himself under so great and continual provocations from his own creatures and beneficiaries, those whom he had made, and whom he came to save; shall we think much to bear the indignities and affronts of our fellow-creatures? When we behold how contented this great person was in the meanest condition, how he welcomed all events, and was so perfectly resigned to the will of his heavenly father, that whatsoever pleased God, pleased him; shall we murmur at any condition which the providence of God allots to us, and repine at any event whatsoever?

Shall we resent injuries and affronts and calumnies so heinously as to be out of all temper and patience, when we consider with what meekness of temper, and how little emotion of mind the Son of God bore all these? how *he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; and with-held not his face from shame and spitting; how he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; being reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.*

To conclude, can we entertain thoughts of revenge towards the instruments of our sufferings, when we have such a pattern of forgiving before us, who poured out his blood for the expiation of the guilt of them that shed it, and spent his last breath in a most fervent and charitable prayer for his betrayers and murderers?

Thus we should propose to ourselves the pattern of our Lord's spirit and demeanour under sufferings, in whom meekness and submission and *patience had their perfect work*; that the same mind may be in us, that was in *Christ Jesus*, and that as we have him for an example, we may follow his steps.

The last consideration of comfort and support under trouble, which the christian religion gives us, remains yet to be spoken to, namely, that we are assured of a most compassionate and prevalent and perpetual Patron and Advocate and Intercessor with God for us.

But this, together with the application of this whole discourse, I shall refer to the next opportunity.

S E R M O N CLXIV.

The true Remedy against the Troubles of Life.

JOHN xiv. 1.

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God; believe also in me.**The fourth
Sermon on
this Text.*

I Come now to the *fifth* and last ground of comfort, which the christian religion affords to good men, for their support under trouble, namely, That it assures us of a most compassionate and prevalent and perpetual Patron and Advocate and Intercessor with God in heaven for us, namely, our blessed Saviour, *who for the suffering of death was crowned with glory and honour, advanced at the right hand of God, where he sits in great majesty and glory, having all power in heaven and earth committed to him, and where he lives continually to make intercession for us.*

And this is another consideration mentioned by our Saviour for the comfort of his disciples, who were so sorrowful at the thoughts of his departure from them, That though he should leave the world, yet he should be highly advanced in heaven, where he would certainly employ all his favour and power and interest for their benefit and advantage, and be an everlasting Patron and Advocate for those whose salvation he had purchased with so much sweat and blood, presenting our requests and prayers to God, in virtue of his most meritorious sacrifice and sufferings continually presented to his Father, perpetually soliciting our cause, and procuring for us all those blessings by his intercession in heaven, which he had purchased for us by his blood upon earth. *For which reason, saith the apostle, Heb. vii. 25. he is able to save to the utmost all those that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us;* that is, he is able to perfect the work of our salvation, which he began here upon earth; and to procure for all those who address their prayers to God in his name, whatever is needful and convenient for us, because he is always at the right hand of God to second our prayers by his powerful intercession for us.

And this is a ground of comfort, though not greater and more substantial in itself than the other; yet more accommodated to our apprehensions, who are naturally apt to dread the majesty of God, and to seek out for some in favour with him, to be mediators and intercessors with God for us, and to present our prayers and requests to him. And this was the original of the addresses of the heathens to the angels and souls departed, as a kind of intermediate and inferior Deities, to present their prayers, and intercede with the great God in their behalf. And as in compliance with the general apprehension of mankind concerning the appeasing of the Deity by all sorts of sacrifices, God was pleased to provide *one sacrifice*, which by being *once offered* should *obtain eternal redemption for us, and perfect for ever them that are sanctified*, and by this means to put an end both to the carnal sacrifices of the law, and the barbarous and inhuman sacrifices of the pagan worship: so in like condescension to the general inclinations of mankind to address themselves to God by several mediators and intercessors, God hath appointed *one only Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all*, thereby to put an end to that infinite superstition, which had obtained in the world for so many ages, of addressing their prayers to God by the mediation of good angels, and the departed souls of their heroes and great men, who were, as I may so call them, the pagan saints.

So

So that as under the gospel God hath appointed but *one sacrifice for sin*, that should be of eternal efficacy; so but *one Mediator* in heaven for sinners, to offer up our prayers to God, and to intercede continually for us, in the power and virtue of that *one sacrifice once offered for the redemption, of mankind*. And therefore it is every whit as contrary to the genius and design of the christian religion, to apply ourselves to other intercessors with God in heaven for us, whether saints or angels, or even the blessed virgin herself, as it would be to continue still the *Jewish* sacrifices, not to say the *heathen*. For it is not clearer that there is but *one proper sacrifice* under the gospel, *viz.* that of *Christ upon the cross*, than that there is but *one Mediator and Intercessor with God in heaven for us*. Nay, St. Paul speaks as if the christian religion did no more admit of more *Mediators* than one, than of more Gods than one, 1 Tim. ii. 5. *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all*. Nor is the force of this plain text to be avoided, by saying that the apostle here speaks of a *Mediator of redemption*, as appears from the following words, *who gave himself a ransom for all*. For it is plain likewise, that he speaks also of a *Mediator of intercession*, and affirms him to be *but one*, as is evident from what goes before. The apostle directs *prayers and supplications to be made for all men*, and then at the fifth ver. to whom christians should address these prayers, and by whose mediation, *viz.* to God, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ. For, says he, *there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus*. So that the apostle's discourse does as plainly infer, that there is but *one Mediator of intercession*, as that there is but *one Mediator of redemption*.

And indeed whosoever considers that quite throughout the new testament our Saviour and his apostles do constantly direct christians to make their prayers to God in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, and no where give so much as the least intimation of applying ourselves to any other intercessors with God in heaven for us, may justly wonder how this superstition of praying to angels and saints departed, which hath no manner of countenance, and is by necessary consequence so clearly forbidden, should ever prevail among christians; especially since it is a plain diminution of the virtue and efficacy of our Saviour's intercession; or if it add nothing to it, it is perfectly vain and endless, and to no purpose. For what need of any other intercessors with God in heaven for us, if that be true which the apostle to the *Hebrews* most expressly affirms, that *Christ is able to save them to the utmost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*.

The prevalency and efficacy whereof may justly minister to us in all our distresses and troubles, some peculiar ground of comfort above what springs from the bare contemplation of the divine nature; that we have so powerful a friend to intercede with God for us, one so dearly beloved of him, and so highly in his favour; one that is advanced *far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come*; and consequently able to do more for us, than all the blessed saints and angels in heaven, and more than all the powers of darkness can do against us.

And this is matter of great comfort to us upon these *three* considerations.

1. That our advocate is nearly related to us, having condescended, by assuming our nature, to be allied to us, to become *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*, so that we may address ourselves to him with great freedom and confidence, and, as the apostle expresseth it, Heb. iv. 16. *We may come with boldness to this Throne of grace, for seasonable mercy and help in time of need*. For we may most assuredly believe, that he who stooped to be made man, and to become one of us, will upon all occasions most heartily be concerned for us, and ready to help us.

2. Considering that he hath already given the greatest demonstration of his kindness and compassion to us; we may be sure that he who hath done and suffered such things for our sakes, hath a very tender love and affection for us; he who was contented to die for us, will do for us any thing else that may do us good.

3. And that we might have no doubt of his forwardness and inclination to pity and relieve us, he suffered the most grievous things himself that any man could suffer, that from the experience and remembrance of his own sufferings, he might learn to compassionate us. And this the apostle particularly insists upon, as a very comfortable consideration to us in all our trials and sufferings, *Heb. iv. 15, 16. For we have not an high-priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are; yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* And *Chap. ii. 17, 18. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest: for in that he himself suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* So that we may rest assured of his pity and support in all our afflictions and trials, who knows both the infirmity of our nature, and hath himself had experience of greater sufferings than any of us either shall or can ever be exercised withal.

And as for the general concernment of his truth and religion, and church upon earth, that which all good men are with so much reason solicitous about, this is his proper care, and the great business that he is intent upon, now that he is in heaven, to protect and defend his truth and religion, and the church which professeth it, so that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* This is his kingdom, for the effectual administration whereof *all power in heaven and in earth is committed to him.* And as he intercedeth with his Father for every particular christian, so much more for his church, which is his body; to preserve her from all dangers that threaten her ruin, and to guard her against the power and malice of all her enemies. For to this end was he advanced to the right hand of God, that he might continue there, *till he had made his enemies his footstool.* And this kingdom of his shall continue in his hands, *till he have put down all rule, and all authority and power that sets itself against him: for he must reign, till he have put all things under his feet.*

So that though truth may be obscured and clouded for a time, and the professors of it grievously harassed and oppressed, yet it shall not finally be borne down, but shall at length prevail against all opposition; because he who hath undertaken the protection of it is mighty, the *King of kings, and Lord of lords*, the chief favourite of heaven, who is continually *at the right hand of God, and lives for ever to make intercession for us.*

And thus I have, as briefly as I well could, represented to you, what force and virtue there is in the two remedies here prescribed by our Saviour, for the mitigating and allaying of our troubles, *viz. faith in God, the great Creator and Governor of the world; and faith likewise in himself, the Son of God and Saviour of men.* *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God; believe also in me.*

And now to apply this discourse to ourselves; the inferences I shall make from it shall be these three.

I. That in all our troubles and adversities, of what kind soever, we should support and comfort ourselves with the firm belief of the providence of almighty God, and of his tender and compassionate care of mankind, especially of *those that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy.*

II. We should put a high value upon the christian religion; and *hold fast the profession of it without wavering;* which affords us such firm and solid grounds of comfort and support under all troubles and afflictions, as are no where else to be found; such as neither the light of nature, nor any other revelation that God ever made of himself to mankind, do give us the notice and knowledge of.

III. Since the prayers of Christ are so effectual and prevalent with God, let us by frequent and fervent prayers make our requests known to God; and let us, *with confidence and full assurance of faith, address ourselves to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find favour with him for our seasonable help and support in the time of need.* I shall speak briefly to these, and so conclude this discourse.

I. In all troubles and adversities of what kind soever, under all afflictions and sufferings that may befall us, of loss or pain, of poverty and sickness, of reproach and persecution for righteousness sake, and under the most fearful apprehensions of danger and distress, to all human appearance inevitably threatening us in our persons and private concerns, or with relation to the publick peace and tranquillity, or to that which ought to be infinitely dearer to us than all these, our religion, which is the great concernment of our souls, and of all eternity, when we have no hope any where else, no visible means of help and redress, when we are almost in despair of avoiding the danger, and warding off the blow that is made at us, when ruin and destruction seem just to have overtaken us, and are ready to devour us with open mouth, and to swallow us up quick; in a word, when we are reduced to the greatest extremity and distress that can be imagined, even in this case, if ever it should happen, we should support our minds with a firm belief of the providence of almighty God, and of his tender and compassionate care of mankind, especially of those that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy; and comfort ourselves, as the holy and divine Psalmist does, in all our fears and troubles; *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee, Psal. lvi. 3.* And he tells us that every good man hath ground and reason for this confidence, *Psal. cxii. 7, 8.* speaking of the righteous and good man, *He shall not, says he, be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid.* And *Psal. xxvii. 1.* *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* *Psal. lxii. 5, 6, 7, 8.* *My soul wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence, I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us.* And *Psal. xlv. 1, 2, 7.* *God is our refuge and strength; and a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed; and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.* To which I will add that comfortable promise, *Isa. xxvi. 3.* *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.*

Thus we may in all conditions that may befall us, in our greatest fears and troubles, ease our hearts, by reposing ourselves upon God, in confidence of his support and deliverance, of his care and providence, to prevent and divert the evils we fear; or of his gracious help to bear us up under them, and of his mercy and goodness to deliver us out of them, when he sees it best; provided always that we be careful of our duty to him, and do what becomes us, and nothing else.

For our more particular direction herein,

1. Let us depend upon God, and entirely confide in his goodness and care, and trust his wisdom and power for our protection and deliverance: for here is our great security. In all our difficulties and troubles, the providence of God is infinitely more to us, than any prudence and conduct of our own. He hath a thousand ways to divert and put by the evils which are levelled against us, *to turn the counsels of men backward, and make their devices of none effect.* When we can do nothing to help and save ourselves, *his right hand, and his arm, and the light of his countenance, can do it, if he have a favour for us.*

2. Let us so trust God, as to neglect no prudent and lawful means for our security and preservation from evil. Let us not, by our rashness and folly, provoke trouble and danger, and bring them upon ourselves. Let us according to our Saviour's counsel, *be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves.* Let us use all that care and prudence which is consistent with innocence and a good conscience; and when we have done that, let us be no farther solicitous, but resign up ourselves, and all our concerns, to the good pleasure of God, and the disposal of his wise providence; and leave it to him, who made the world, to govern it, because he certainly understands it best.

3. Let us be sure to keep within the bounds of our duty, trying no unlawful ways for our ease and preservation, and rescue from the evils which we fear and

lie under; by loosening the bonds of subjection and obedience to authority, or by any other sinister and indirect means. For let us assure ourselves, that God is never more concerned to appear for us, than when out of conscience of our duty to him, we are contented rather to suffer, than work our deliverance by undue means. Let us *commit ourselves to him in well-doing*, and do nothing, no, not for the cause of religion, which is contrary to the plain rules and precepts of it.

II. We should put a high value upon the christian religion, and *hold fast the profession of it without wavering*, which affords to us such firm and solid grounds of comfort and support under all troubles and afflictions, as are no where else to be found; such as neither the light of nature, nor any other revelation that God ever made of himself to mankind, do give us notice and knowledge of.

We should highly value the christian religion, which hath *brought life and immortality to light*, and hath made so clear a discovery to us of the glorious and eternal rewards of another world, for the encouragement of our faith, and support of our patience, under the evils and pressures of this life; and which promiseth, and is ready to afford to every sincere christian, the precious aids and comforts of God's holy Spirit, to sustain the weakness of human nature under the greatest tribulations and sufferings; and does likewise assure us of the special efficacy of our prayers with God; and sets before us the best and most admirable pattern that ever was, of a contented and chearful submission to the will of God in the saddest condition incident to human nature, and of perfect patience and composure of mind under the apprehension of approaching evils, and the sense of present sufferings; and lastly, which assures of a most compassionate and prevalent and perpetual patron and advocate and intercessor with God in heaven for us. All these are peculiar advantages of the christian religion, and ought to be so many endearments of it to us, and engagements to *hold fast the profession of it*. This builds our comfort and hope upon a *rock*, which will abide firm against all *rains and winds and storms*. And if we suffer ourselves to be removed from it, we quit the only foundation of all our comfort in this life, and happiness in the next. So that if we would *hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope, firm unto the end*, we must take heed, as the apostle to the Hebrews, Chap. iii. 12. cautions the christians in his time; *we must, I say, take heed, lest there be in any of us an evil spirit of infidelity, to apostatise from the living God*, that is, to fall off from the profession of his truth and religion. A religion worthy of all men to be received and adhered to; because as it calls us to sufferings, so it affords the greatest comforts and supports under them, as is evident from the chearful and joyful behaviour of the primitive christians and martyrs, under the greatest extremities of sufferings and torments, the like instances whereto of patience and constancy under so long and repeated persecutions, no other religion that ever was in the world is able to produce.

III. And *lastly*, since the prayers of christians are so effectual and prevalent with God, let us, by frequent and fervent *prayer in every thing make our requests known to God*; and let us with confidence and full assurance of faith address ourselves to the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find favour with him for our *seasonable help and support in time of need*. Let us, as our Saviour exhorts his disciples, *watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation*. And, as the apostle likewise exhorts, let us *be sober and vigilant, and watch unto prayer*, taking all opportunities for it, and spending much time in this duty, than which none of all the duties enjoined by the christian religion will turn to a better and more comfortable account, if our hearts and lives be but answerable to our prayers.

Let us earnestly beg of God, that his watchful and merciful providence would undertake the care of us; that he would fit and prepare us for every condition which he hath designed to bring us into; that he would teach us to demean ourselves in it as we ought; that he would consider our frailties, and *lay no greater load of affliction upon us, than he will give us grace and strength to bear*; that if he sees it good to exercise any of us with afflictions and sufferings in any kind, he would make us able to stand in that evil day, and when we have done all to stand.

And

And if, instead of vain murmurings, and complaints, and terrifying ourselves with fears of what may never happen, we would, after the example of holy *David*, betake ourselves to prayer, and by this means engage the providence of God for our protection from evil, or for our support under it; we should certainly do much better for ourselves, and contribute much more, than we can do any other way, to the prevention of any evil that we can fear, or to the mitigating or shortening of it, as to God's infinite wisdom and goodness shall seem best.

And let us always be mindful of that caution which our Saviour gives to his disciples, that they might always be in a due preparation for the coming of our Lord to judgment, *Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36. Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.* This caution and counsel does proportionably hold, as to our preparation for any other evil day of affliction and suffering in this world; that we should beware of sensuality, and an inordinate love to the things of this world, and care about them; because these soften and effeminate our spirits, and render them unfit for the day of adversity: and that we should watch and pray; because these are the best preparations against an evil day, and perhaps may prevent it, at least as to ourselves, if God think it fit for us, and count us worthy to escape it.

To conclude then this whole discourse. In all our fears and troubles, in all afflictions and adversities that may happen to us in this world, let us encourage ourselves in the Lord our God, the Father of mercy, and the God of all consolation; and in his blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord, the high priest of our profession, and the author and finisher of our faith; whom God hath exalted far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come, and hath given him to be head over all things to his church; remembering that we and all our concerns are in the hands of his providence, where we are infinitely safer than in any counsel and wisdom of our own. And if, after all, it be the will of God to exercise any of us with more than ordinary trials, to lay affliction upon our loins, and to suffer men to ride over our heads, as the Psalmist expresseth it, let us, as St. Peter exhorts, commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator, who is able to keep that which is committed to him, and to preserve us to his heavenly kingdom; which let us all humbly and earnestly beg, for the sake of Jesus Christ; To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, might, majesty and dominion now and for ever.

SERMON CLXV.

Of the Nature of FAITH in general.

H E B. xi. 6.

*But without Faith it is impossible to please God.**The first
Sermon on
this Text.*

BEFORE I come to the words themselves, in order to our better understanding of them, we will take into consideration the design of this epistle, that so we may see more clearly the relation that these words have to the foregoing discourse. Who the penman of this epistle was, I shall not tell you, because I do not know, nor is it much material to know it; but whoever wrote it, he had this very good design in the writing of it, to persuade the *Jews* to hold fast the profession of the gospel, notwithstanding all the sufferings and persecutions it exposed them to. And to this purpose he shews at large, what prerogatives the gospel had above the legal administration. *The law was given by the disposition of the angels, in the hand of a mediator, that is, Moses*: but the gospel is revealed to us by *the Son of God*; a person, not only above *Moses*, who was a meer man; but above angels. The gospel is the substance and reality of the types and ceremonies, and the very good things themselves, that were obscurely represented by those shadows. It is a testament established upon better promises, the clear promises of eternal life, which were but darkly revealed in the old testament, that being established either solely or principally upon temporal promises; and it is a perfect and compleat dispensation, that hath in it all things requisite to attain its end, and therefore shall never stand in need of any further change or alteration. These are the heads of those arguments which the author of this epistle does largely discourse upon.

Now the gospel having in these respects the advantage of the legal dispensation, the apostle doth all along in this epistle earnestly exhort the *Jews* to a constant profession and stedfast belief of the gospel, and not to return back from christianity to judaism, which was a far less perfect institution, *Chap. ii. 1. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, παραρρησόμεν, lest we should fall away*, so the word may be rendered. And *Ch. iii. 12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.* And, *Ch. iv. 1. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* And, *Ch. x. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.*

After which he declares the danger of apostasy, or falling off from the belief and profession of the gospel which they had entertained; *ver. 26. For if we sin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.* He tells them they would be shrewdly tempted to apostasy by the reproaches, afflictions and persecutions that they would meet withal; but the promises of the gospel were sufficient to support and bear up good men under these, if they were but firmly persuaded of the truth of them; and though they did not for the present receive the things promised, yet a firm belief of them would carry them through all sufferings, and make them hold out under them. *The just shall live by faith, v. 38.*

And having mentioned the power of faith; that is, of a confident persuasion of the truth and reality of the promises of the gospel to support men

under sufferings, he gives an account how faith uses to have this influence, *ver. 1.* *Faith is the substance of things hoped for*; so we render the word *ὑπόστασις*: but it might be much better rendered, both according to the frequent use of it in the *Septuagint*, and in the new testament, *a confidence of things hoped for*, that is, a confident expectation of things hoped for, or a firm persuasion that our hopes will not be frustrated. And as this is more agreeable to the scope and design of the apostle, so likewise to the common acceptation of this word in the new testament, for which I will appeal to two place, *2 Cor. ix. 4.* *that we be not put to shame in this confidence of boasting*, ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ. The other text is in this epistle, *Chap. iii. 14.* *That we hold fast the beginning of our confidence*, τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως, which is of the very same sense with *παρρησία*, at the sixth *ver.* *If we hold fast the confidence παρρησίαν, and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.* And the evidence of things not seen, ἐλεγχῶ, the conviction, as being convinced, or persuaded of the truth of those things, for which we have no ocular or sensible demonstration. Now if faith in the promises of the gospel do persuade us and give us satisfaction that we shall receive a reward, which will out-weigh and countervail our present sufferings, then faith is likely to support us under sufferings.

And that this is no strange thing which the apostle speaks of faith, he shews that in all ages, faith hath been the principle of all holy and heroick actions. By it the elders obtained a good report; it is that which made the holy men of the old testament so famous; and this he proves throughout this chapter, by a large induction of particular instances, in which we see the power of faith, the wonderful effects of it, and the mighty works it hath done in the world.

But because he had said before, that *Faith is the evidence or conviction of things not seen*, as well as *a confident expectation of things hoped for*, before he comes to instance in the effects of faith upon particular persons in the old testament, he proves it to be *the evidence of things not seen*, that is, being convinced and persuaded of things of which we have no sensible and ocular demonstration, *ver. 3.* *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear*; that is, though we were not present at the making of the world, nor did see it framed; yet we are satisfied, and do believe that it was made by the powerful word of God, and that all those things which we see, were not produced out of things which do now appear, but either immediately out of nothing, or a dark confused chaos.

And having thus proved that we may be persuaded of things we do not see, of things past or future, he comes to the particular instances of the holy men of the old testament, in whom the power of faith did appear. He begins with *Abel*, who being persuaded of the Being of God, and the perfection and excellency of the divine nature, and consequently that he was worthy to be served with the best, by virute of this faith offered up to God a more excellent sacrifice than *Cain*. The second instance is in *Enoch*, who being persuaded of the being of God, and of his goodness to reward them that serve him, was a righteous man, and studious to please God; and as a reward of this faith and obedience, *God translated him that he should not see death*; upon which the apostle assumes, *ver. 6.* *But without faith it is impossible to please God.* As if he had said, unless a man do believe, and be persuaded of some principles, it is impossible any man should be religious, or endeavour to do any thing that is pleasing or acceptable to God: for religion, and the service of God, and an endeavour to please him, do suppose at least that I believe and am persuaded of these two things, of the Being, and of the goodness of God, that there is such a Being as I serve and seek to please, and that his goodness is such, that it will not be in vain to serve him, he will not let me be a loser by it.

And that here by *pleasing*, we are to understand in general, the performing any action of religion, is evident from the equivalent terms which are used in the next words, *For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him*; where *coming to God*, and *seeking of him*, are of the same importance with *pleasing him*. Now to come to God, and seek him, in scrip-
ture

ture phrase signify the sum of religion, it being usual in the language of the scripture, to express the whole of religion by any eminent principle, or part, or effect of it, as by the knowledge, remembrance, or fear of God in the old testament; by the love of him, and faith in him, in the new, by coming to him, seeking him, calling upon his name, and pleasing of him.

Now that *coming to God*, and *seeking him*, are of the same importance here with *pleasing him*, will be clear to any that consider the apostle's reasoning here in the text, which supposeth those to be the same, otherwise there would be no force in his argument. For the proposition which he proves, is, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*. The argument he useth is this, if *every one that comes to God must believe that he is, &c.* then *without faith it is impossible to please him*; but *every one that comes to God must believe that he is*. Now unless *coming to God*, and *seeking him*, be the same thing with *pleasing him*, this would be no good argument; for there would be four terms in it; but if these phrases be made equivalent, then the argument is good. Thus, if *every one that comes to God*, that is, that will *please him*, *must believe that he is, &c.* then *without faith it is impossible to please him*: but *every one that comes to God*, that is, that will *please him*, *must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, or that endeavour to please him*: therefore *without faith it is impossible to please him*.

Which proposition doth not only signify that faith is necessary to religion, and a condition without which it cannot be; but implies likewise, that it is a cause or principle of it; not only the foundation upon which all religion must be built; but the fountain from whence it springs. For this I take to be imply'd in the words, not only that there can be no religion unless we believe a God; but supposing this truth firmly believed, that there is a God, it will have a great influence upon men to make them religious. For the apostle having before spoken of the power of faith upon *Abel* and *Enoch*, that it put them upon *pleasing God*, he assumes in the next words, *but without faith, &c.* As if he had said, that ye may know what was the principle of their religion, of their holiness and obedience, let us imagine that a man should believe nothing concerning the being of a God, or the blessedness of those that serve him; what would be the issue? Why this certainly, there would be no religion, no such thing as serving of God, or endeavouring to please him; for unless we believe that he is, and that he will reward those that seek to please him, it is impossible, that is, it is unreasonable to think men should attempt to please him. So that faith is the cause and principle of religion, it is the thing, *quo posito, ponitur effectus*; & *quo sublato, tollitur*. Do but suppose and admit that a man truly believes there is a God; and he will seek to please him: but if you suppose a man believes no such thing; he will cast off all religion. This is the plain meaning of the words; not, as some have thought, that without faith a man may perform religious actions; but then they would not be accepted, or pleasing to God: but that which the apostle means is, Without faith it is impossible there should be any religion: not that religious acts should be performed in an acceptable manner; as if *Cain* had offered as good a sacrifice as *Abel*, only faith made the difference; but *Cain* did not believe, was not persuaded of the being of God and his excellency, therefore thought to put God off with any thing; *Abel* believed, and did offer a more excellent sacrifice, not more excellent because it was mixed with faith, but it was more excellent in itself.

The *Observation* therefore from these words is this, that faith is one great principle of all religious actions.

In the handling of this, I shall endeavour

First, To fix and settle the true notion of faith, whereby we may come to understand the general nature of it.

Secondly, To confirm the truth of the proposition.

Thirdly, Draw some inferences from hence.

First, To settle and fix the true notion of faith, whereby we may come to understand the general nature of it. I find that most who write upon this subject have

have marvellously puzzled themselves with the various acceptations of this word *πίστις* and the verb *πιστεύειν*. infomuch that some have undertaken to enumerate above twenty distinct significations of this word. I cannot find so many, it may be others may; but hereby instead of clearing the notion of faith, they have involved it, and made it more intricate, and have made men believe, that it is a notion very remote from common understanding: whereas there is not any word that is in common use, that is more plain and easy, and which any one may understand better than this of faith and believing.

Therefore in the explication of it, I shall attend to the use of it in common speech, and in all authors, as well prophane as sacred; and I shall not guide myself by terms of art, which have been received in the schools, and have confounded the meaning of words, by distorting them from the common and received use of them; but shall govern myself by the nature of things to which this word in common use is applied.

I shall remove two acceptations of it which are less usual, and then fix the common and general notion of it, to which all the other more particular significations may be referred. The two less usual acceptations are these.

First, It is sometimes put for the particular grace or virtue which is called fidelity, or faithfulness in our promises and contracts; and in this sense it is sometimes used in common discourse, and in all sorts of writers. I shall only mention a text or two where it is so taken; *Mat. xxiii. 23. And have omitted the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith, that is, fidelity.* And *Rom. iii. 3. with relation to God, Shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect?* that is, his faithfulness in his promises. *Tit. ii. 10. Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity, πίστιν πᾶσαν, all faith.*

Secondly, It is sometimes put for spiritual gifts, and particularly the gift of miracles, which were wrought by the power of faith. *Rom. xii. 3. According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith;* that is, of spiritual gifts of *prophecy*, or *ministry*, or *exhortation*, as it is explained afterward. *1 Cor. xii. 2. To another is given faith by the same spirit;* that is, a power of miracles in general, as learned interpreters think. Nor doth that which is added afterwards, *that to another is given the working of miracles*, prejudice this interpretation; for *ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων*, the operation of powers, which we render of *miracles*, seems to signify some special sort of miracles, not the power of miracles in general. And this seems to be favoured by the acceptation of it in the next chapter, *ver. 2. And though I had all Faith, so that I could remove mountains;* where faith is undoubtedly taken for the power of miracles.

These being removed, as very alien and remote from the common and usual acceptation of the word, I come now to fix the general notion of faith, to which all other acceptations of it may easily be reduced; and it is this.

Faith is a persuasion of the mind concerning any thing; concerning the truth of any proposition, concerning the existence, or futurity, or lawfulness or convenience, or possibility, or goodness of any thing, or the contrary; or concerning the credit of a person, or the contrary. And this notion is not only agreeable to the proper notion of the word *πίστις*, which comes from *πείθω* to persuade, but is warranted from the common use of it in this latitude. It is ordinary for men to say, they believe or are persuaded such a proposition is true or false, such a thing is or is not, such an event will be or will not be, that such an action is lawful or unlawful, such a thing is good or bad, convenient or inconvenient, possible or impossible to be done; or that they believe such a person, or do not believe him. And I could shew from scripture, that *believing* is applied to all these matters, and many more; I will only instance in one or two.

That *faith* is frequently used for the persuasion of the truth of a doctrine, or of the veracity of God or Christ, I shall not need to produce any texts, there are so many.

That *faith* is used for a persuasion of the lawfulness of an action, the 14th Chapter to the *Romans* doth abundantly testify. *Ver. 2. One believeth that he may eat all things*; that is, is persuaded in his mind that all sorts of meat are lawful without distinction. *Ver. 22. Hast thou faith?* that is, art thou persuaded or satisfied in thy mind of the lawfulness of those indifferent things he had been speaking of? *Ver. 23. He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*: that is, whatever is not done with the persuasion and satisfaction of our minds that we may lawfully do it, *is sin*. I shall trouble you with no more instances.

Now this being the general notion of *faith*, that it is a persuasion of the mind concerning any thing, from hence by a *metonymy* it comes to be put for the argument whereby this persuasion is wrought in us. Hence it is, that among the rhetoricians *πίστις* are any kind of argument or proof which orators make use of to persuade men; and there is one place in the new testament, where *πίστις* seems to be used in this sense, or very near it, *Acts xvii. 31. Because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world, &c. whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead, πίστιν παρασχὼν πάντων, having offered faith to all men*; that is, having given us this argument for the proof of it, *that he raised Christ from the dead*.

Sometimes it is put for the object of this persuasion, or the matter or thing whereof we are persuaded. And thus frequently in the new testament, the gospel, which is the object of our faith, the thing which we believe, is called *faith*. And thus you find it used in that phrase of *obedience to the faith*, that is, to the gospel, *Acts vi. 7. Rom. i. 5, xvi. 26*. And in this sense faith, that is the gospel, is frequently opposed to the dispensation of the law, *Rom. iii. 27, 31. and x. 16. Gal. i. 23. He that persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which he once destroyed. Gal. iii. 2. the bearing of the gospel is called the bearing of faith; ver. 23. Before faith came; and ver. 25. But after that faith is come. Eph. iv. 5. There is one faith*, that is, one gospel which we believe. *I Tim. iv. 6. Nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine*.

The opposites to faith are unbelief and credulity. Unbelief, which is a not being persuaded of a thing, is the deficient extreme: or doubting, if it prevail to a degree of unbelief: and credulity, which is an easiness to believe things without any probable argument to induce our persuasion, is the redundant extremum.

The seat or subject of faith is the mind, or the heart, as the scripture usually calls it. *With the heart man believes*, that is, with *the soul*: for I do not understand any real distinction of faculties; but if you will distinguish them, the proper seat of this persuasion is the understanding; the immediate effect of it is upon the will; by which it works upon the affections and the life.

And *faith* in this general notion is not opposed to error, and knowledge, and opinion: but comprehends all these under it. For if a man be persuaded of that which is false, he *believes a lie*, as the scripture expresseth it; a man may be certainly persuaded of a thing, that is, firmly believe it, which is *knowledge*; a man may be probably persuaded of a thing, that is, believe it with some diffidence and uncertainty, and that is *opinion*.

But for our better understanding of this general notion of *faith*, we will take into consideration these four things.

- I. The Cause of it, or the argument whereby it is wrought.
- II The degrees of it, and the difference of them.
- III. The natural efficacy and operation of it.
- IV. The several kinds of it.

I. We will consider the cause of faith, or the argument whereby it is wrought. Now all the arguments whereby faith may be wrought in us, that is a persuasion of any thing, will I think fall under one of these *four* heads; sense, experience, reason drawn from the thing, or the authority and testimony of some person.

I. Sense. Hence it is commonly said, that *seeing is believing*, that is, one of the best arguments to persuade us of any thing. That faith may be wrought by this argument, appears both from the nature of the thing, nothing being more apt to persuade us of any thing than our senses; and from several expressions in scripture. I will instance in one for all. *John xx. 8. Then went in also the other disciple into the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.* And whereas scripture opposeth faith to sight, as *2 Cor. v. 7. We walk by faith, and not by sight; Heb. xi. 1. It is the evidence of things not seen*; we are to understand that only concerning a belief of the things of another world, which are futurities, and invisible, which the apostle is there speaking of; or of things which are of the same nature with these, as things past: not but that a man may very well be induced to believe a thing by his senses.

2. Experience; which though it may be sensible, and then it is the same argument with sense; yet sometimes it is not, and then it is an argument distinct from it. As for example, a man may by experience be persuaded or induced to believe this proposition, that his will is free, that he can do this, or not do it; which is a better argument than a demonstration to the contrary, if there could be one.

3. Reasons drawn from the thing; which may either be necessary and concluding, or else only probable and plausible.

4. The authority and testimony of some credible person. Now two things give authority and credit to the relation, or testimony, or assertion of a person concerning any thing; ability and integrity. Ability, if he can be presumed to have a competent knowledge of what he relates, or asserts, or testifies; and integrity, if he may be presumed to be honest in his relation, and free from any design, or will to deceive. And to these heads, I think, all arguments of belief may be reduced.

II. The *second* thing to be considered is the degrees of faith, and the difference of them. And that there are degrees, I take for granted, though I shall afterwards have occasion to prove it in a divine faith; and these depend perfectly upon the capacity of the person that believes, or is persuaded. Now the capacity, or incapacity of persons are infinitely various, and not to be reduced to theory; but supposing a competent capacity in the person, then the degrees of faith or persuasion take their difference from the arguments, or motives, or inducements which are used to persuade. Where sense is the argument, there is the highest and firmest degree of faith, or persuasion. Next to that is experience, which is beyond any argument or reason from the thing. The faith, or persuasion which is wrought in us by reasons drawn from the thing, the degrees of it are, as the reasons are: if they be necessary and concluding, it is firm and certain in its kind; if only probable, according to the degrees of probability, it hath more or less of doubting mixed with it. Lastly, the faith which is wrought in us by testimony or authority of a person, takes its degrees from the credit of a person, that is, his ability and integrity. Now because *all men are liars*, that is, either may deceive, or be deceived, their testimony partakes of their infirmity, and so doth the degree of persuasion wrought by it: but God being both infallible, and true, and consequently it being impossible that he should either deceive, or be deceived, his testimony begets the firmest persuasion, and the highest degree of faith in its kind. But then it is to be considered, that there not being a revelation of a revelation *in infinitum*; that this is a divine testimony and revelation, we can only have rational assurance; and the degree of the faith or persuasion which is wrought by a divine testimony will be according to the strength of the arguments which we have to persuade us that such a testimony is divine.

III. for the efficacy or operation of faith, we are to consider that the things we may believe or be persuaded of, are of *two* sorts. Either, 1. They are such as do not concern me; and then the mind rests in a naked and simple belief of them, and a faith or persuasion of such things has no effect upon me; but is apt to have, if ever it happen that the matter do concern me: or else, 2. The thing I believe or am persuaded of doth concern me; and then it hath several effects according to the nature of the thing I am persuaded of, or the degree of the persuasion, or the capacity of the person that believes or is persuaded. If the thing believed be of great moment, the effect of the faith is proportionable, *cæteris paribus*; and so

according to the degree of the persuasion: but if the person be indisposed to the proper effects of such a persuasion by the power of contrary habits, as it often happens, the effect will be obtained with more difficulty, and may possibly be totally defeated, by casting off the persuasion: for while it remains, it will operate and endeavour, and strive to work its proper effect. For example, a man may believe that wine is very pernicious to him; and yet a strong inclination to it may render it very difficult for this persuasion to work its proper effect upon him, which is to leave off wine, and may at length wholly defeat it, by furnishing him with some colour of argument that may persuade him otherwise.

IV. For the kinds of faith they are several, according to the variety of objects or things believed. I shall reduce them all under these *two* general heads.

1. Faith is either civil or human, under which I comprehend the persuasion of things moral, and natural, and political, and the like: Or,

2. Divine and religious, that is, a persuasion of things that concern religion. I know not whether these terms be proper, nor am I very solicitous, because I know none fitter, and tell you what I mean by them.

The *first* kind of faith concerning things human and civil, I shall not speak of, it being besides my design.

The *second*, which I call a religious and divine faith, comprehends *three* things under it, which are distinctly to be considered.

1. A persuasion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature, as the existence of a God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state.

2. A persuasion of things supernatural and revealed.

3. A persuasion of supernatural revelation. These I design fully to handle. Thus I have prepared materials for a large discourse; which though it be necessary, is, I am sensible, but too tedious, and yet possibly more tedious to me than you.

S E R M O N CLXVI.

Of a Religious and Divine Faith.

H E B. xi. 6.

But without Faith it is impossible to please God.

The second Sermon on this Text. **I**N my last discourse I came to treat of a religious and divine faith, which, I told you, comprehends under it three things, which I now proceed to consider distinctly.

First, A persuasion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature.

Secondly, A persuasion of things supernatural and revealed.

Thirdly, A persuasion of supernatural revelation.

First, A persuasion of the principles of natural religion, such as the light of nature could discover; such are the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state. The things to be enquired concerning this kind of faith are these.

I. Whether

- I. Whether this be truly and properly called faith.
- II. What are the arguments whereby it is wrought.
- III. Whether it admit of degrees or not, and what differences are observable in them.

IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of it.

V. In what sense it may be said to be divine faith.

I. Whether it may truly and properly be called faith, or not? If the general notion of faith which I have fixed before, *viz.* That it is a persuasion of the mind concerning any thing, be a true notion of faith, then there is no doubt but this may as properly be called faith, as any thing can be; because a man may be persuaded in his mind concerning these things, that there is a God, that our souls are immortal, that there is another state after this life.

But besides this, if the scripture speaks properly, as we have reason to believe it does, especially when it treats professedly of any thing, as the apostle here does, then this question is fully decided: for it is evident to any one that will but read this verse, out of which I have taken my text, that the apostle doth here in this place speak of this kind of faith, that is, a belief or persuasion of the principles of natural religion. For after the apostle had said, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*; he immediately instanceth in the belief of the principles of natural religion, as necessary to the pleasing of God, that is, to make a man religious. *He that cometh to God must believe that he is*; there is the existence of God, the first principle of natural religion: *and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*; which implies the other two, the immortality of the soul, and a future state; for if good men shall be rewarded, there must be a subject capable of such rewards, which brings in the immortality of the soul; and there must be a season for these rewards, which because they are seldom bestowed in this world, there must be a season when they shall, which brings in a future state after this life. So that whoever denies that a persuasion of these principles of natural religion may properly be called faith, he quarrels with the apostle, and does not correct me, but the scriptures.

II. What are the arguments whereby this faith or persuasion of these principles of natural religion is wrought? you may remember that I reduced all those arguments, whereby any kind of faith or persuasion is wrought in us, to these *four* heads; sense, experience, reasons drawn from the thing, and the testimony or authority of some person. Now a faith or persuasion of these principles cannot be wrought in us by sense: for *no man hath seen God at any time*, and being a pure spirit, he cannot be the object of any corporeal sense. Nor can the soul, or any mode of its existence, fall under any of our senses; nor a future state; because sense is only of things present. Nor can it be wrought in us merely by experience: for no man can conclude from any thing he experienceth in himself, that there is a God, unless he be first persuaded of it by other arguments: and the immortality of the soul, and a future state, are things which none in this life can experience. Nor can the authority or testimony of any person be the argument that induceth that persuasion. Not any human authority: for these things are of such consequence, and so much depends upon them, that is, the belief of them puts us upon so many things, which men would not do if they did not believe them; as particularly the venturing of our lives upon the account of religion, and all our worldly interests, if occasion call for it; that it were a fond thing to take matters of such moment and importance upon any man's bare word, without other assurance of them. Nor can the testimony or authority of God be the argument that persuades me of the existence of a God. I grant that for the other two, the immortality of the soul, and a future state, it is an excellent, and may be a sufficient argument. Though that these may be proved likewise by other arguments without a revelation, is evident in the heathens, who by the light of nature did assent to them without a revelation. But a divine revelation cannot possibly be an argument inducing me to believe the existence of a God, for this plain reason; because a divine revelation can be no argument to any that is not persuaded that it is a divine revelation: but before I can be persuaded that any
revelation

revelation is from God, I must be persuaded there is a God; and if so, there is no need of this argument to prove to me that there is one: and therefore you do not find it any where revealed in all the scripture, that there is a God. The scripture often declares that *Jehovah is the true and living God*, and that *besides him there is no other*: but it doth not reveal, but every where suppose, that there is one.

It remains then, that it must be another kind of argument whereby we must be persuaded of the existence of a God, and that is by such reasons as may be drawn from things themselves to persuade us hereof; as either from the notion and idea which we have of a God, that he is a Being that hath all perfections, whereof necessary existence is one, and consequently that he must be; or else from the universal consent of all nations, and the generality of persons agreeing in this apprehension, which cannot be attributed reasonably to any other cause, than to impressions stamped upon our understandings by God himself; or (which is most plain of all) from this visible frame of the world, which we cannot, without great violence to our understandings, impute to any other cause than a Being endowed with infinite goodness, and power, and wisdom, which is that we call *God*.

As for the other two principles of natural religion, the immortality of the soul, and a future state; after we believe a God, we may be persuaded of these from divine revelation; and that doth give us the highest and firmest assurance of them in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Yet I do not find but that these also are rather supposed, than expressly revealed in the bible. Indeed the immortality of the soul may be inferred from several places of scripture, and the tenour of the whole bible: and so a future state, which, as for the thing itself, seems to be supposed as a thing acknowledged by natural light; only the scripture hath revealed the circumstances of it more particularly to us, and given us higher assurance of the thing: but if there were no revelation, men might be persuaded of these; and so the heathens were by arguments drawn partly from the operations of the soul, which would almost persuade any man that the soul is immortal; it being altogether unimaginable how a principle that is nothing else but matter, can either understand, or determine itself by its own will; all the motions of matter that we know of, or can imagine, being necessary: and partly from the justice and goodness of God. The consideration of God's goodness would persuade a man, that as he made all things very good, so he made them of the longest duration they were capable of: and the justice of God would easily induce a man to believe, seeing the providence of God doth generally in this life deal promiscuously with good and bad men, that there shall be a day which will make a difference, and every man shall receive according to his works.

But I do not intend to insist upon these arguments; all that I design is, to shew what kind of arguments do work a faith and persuasion in men concerning these principles of natural religion; and they are reasons drawn from the thing.

And it is not always necessary to the working of this faith or persuasion, that these reasons should necessarily, yea, or truly conclude the principle to be believed: if they do it probably, and it appear so to me, it is enough to beget a persuasion in me of such a thing. There are many men entertain the greatest truths, and are firmly persuaded of them, upon an incompetent argument, and such as might persuade them of any thing else as well; and such persons, if they have capacity and understanding, they are rather happy than wise in their religion. It falls out well that they happen to be in the right; for they might have been in the wrong upon the same terms. But if the persons who believe the principles of religion on insufficient arguments, and their belief have a real effect upon them, as it will if it be true and permanent; if they be ignorant, and such as want the ordinary advantage of improving their knowledge, they are wise enough; that is, they are as wise as God's providence hath made them, and the circumstances of their education, and the condition of their life will let them be.

The third thing to be enquired is, Whether this faith or persuasion of the principles of natural religion admit degrees, or not? And what differences are observable in them? That it does admit degrees, that is, that a man may be more

or less persuaded of the truth of those principles, is evident from the heathens; some of whom did yield a more firm and unshaken assent to them; others entertained them with a more faint persuasion of them, especially of the immortality of the soul, and a future state, about which most of them had many qualms and doubts. Of all the heathens, *Socrates* seems to have had the truest and firmest persuasion of these things; which he did not only testify in words; but by the constancy, and calmness, and sedate courage which he manifested at his death. Indeed in his discourse before his death, he says, "He did not know whether his soul shall remain after his body, and whether there be a happiness reserved for good men in another world: but he thought so, and had such hopes of it, that he was very willing to venture his life upon these hopes." Which words, though they seem to be spoke doubtingly, as the manner of the *academy* was; yet considering his manner of speaking, which was modest, and not peremptory and dogmatical, they signify as great a confidence as he had of any thing, and they are high expressions of assurance. For we may believe that the man who dies for any thing, how modestly soever he may express himself, is very well assured of the truth of it. So that this faith and persuasion admits of degrees, the difference whereof is to be resolved partly into the capacity of the persons who believe, and partly into the strength, or at least appearance of strength in the arguments whereby it is wrought.

The fourth thing to be enquired is, What are the proper and genuine effects of this faith or persuasion? Now *that* in a word is natural religion, which consists in apprehensions of God suitable to his nature, and affections towards him suitable to these apprehensions, and actions suitable to both. He that believes there is such a being in the world as God, that is one infinitely good, and wise, and powerful, and just, and holy, and (in a word) cloathed with all excellency, will have a great esteem and reverence for him, and love to him, which he will testify in those outward expressions of respect which we call worship. He that believes that this being is the original of all good, that he made the world, and all the creatures in it, and preserves and governs them, he will depend upon him, and seek to him for every good thing, and acknowledge him for the author of them; which brings in prayer and thanksgiving. He that believes that he owes his being to God, and all the blessings of his life, will think it reasonable that he should be at his disposal, will be willing to be governed by his laws, and ready to submit to his pleasure; which brings in obedience and submission to the will of God. He that believes there is another life after this, wherein men shall be rewarded or punished, according as they have demeaned themselves well or ill in this world, he will be encouraged to piety and virtue, and afraid to do any thing which his own reason tells him is displeasing to the Deity, as he cannot but believe every thing is, that is contrary to the nature of God, or the perfection of his own nature, or the good order and happiness of the world; which brings in temperance and justice, and all other real virtues. And that the belief of these principles had this effect upon several of the heathens, to make them in a good degree religious and virtuous, I doubt not; the moral and honest lives of many of them, give real testimony of this; which natural religion and morality of theirs, how far it may avail them for their good, we are not concerned to determine. This we are sure of, that it will make their condition more tolerable in another world; and if they fall under condemnation, it will mitigate and allay their misery.

V. In what sense this faith or persuasion of the principles of natural religion may be said to be divine? In these *two* respects.

1. In respect of the object of it, or matters to be believed which are divine, and do immediately concern religion, in opposition to that which I call a civil and human faith, which is of such things as do not immediately concern God and religion.

2. In respect of the divine effect of it, which are to make men religious, and like God. And a faith may as properly be said to be divine in respect of the object of it, as in respect of the argument whereby it is wrought; so that a faith of the principles of natural religion is as truly divine, though it be not wrought in us
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by the arguments of divine testimony and authority, as a faith of the matters of divine revelation contained in the holy scriptures: for why a faith may not as well be said to be divine for its relation to God as the object of it, as for its relation to the testimony of God, as the cause of it, I cannot understand.

Secondly, The *second* sort of faith, which I call divine or religious, is a persuasion of things supernaturally revealed, of things which are not known by natural light, but by some more immediate manifestation and discovery from God. Thus we find our Saviour, *Matth. xvi. 15, 16, 17.* opposeth divine revelation to the discovery of natural reason and light. He asks his disciples whom they believed him to be, *Whom say ye that I am?* And Simon Peter answered and said, *Thou art the Christ, (that is, the Messiah) the Son of the living God.* And Jesus answered and said unto him, *Blessed art thou Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee; but my father which is in heaven;* where a revelation or discovery from flesh and blood, is opposed to a revelation from God; *flesh and blood* being a hebrew phrase or manner of speaking, signifying a mere man, or something merely human; so we find the phrase used, *Eph. vi. 12. We wrestle not against flesh and blood; but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness;* that is, the enemies we are to contend with, are not only men, but devils; and which is nearer to our purpose, *Gal. i. 16.* where the apostle would express to us, that he received not his commission from men, but immediately from the Lord Jesus Christ, he tells us, that *when it pleased God, who separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace, to reveal his Son in him, that he might preach him among the heathen, immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood;* the word is *ἠγοράσαυδέναι*, I did not apply myself to flesh and blood; that is, I did not go to men to receive my commission from them: for so he explains it in the next words, *neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them that were apostles before me:* that is, I did not apply myself to the apostles, to derive any authority from them to preach the gospel, because he had no need of that, being called immediately by Christ to this work; which words are nothing else but a farther explication of what he had said before, *ver. 11, 12. I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me, is not after men: for I neither received it of man, neither was taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* So accordingly here our Saviour tells Peter, that this truth, *That Christ was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, was not revealed to him by man, nor by any mere human principle or testimony, but by his father which was in heaven;* that is, by the testimony which God himself gave of him in the holy and divine gospel which he taught, and those miracles which he wrought in confirmation of it.

So that this kind of faith is a persuasion of such things, as are not known by natural light, nor discovered to us by men; but some way or other revealed by God: I say some way or other, for the ways of God's revealing and manifesting himself to us, are various and arbitrary. God may chuse what ways he pleaseth to discover himself to us by. So the apostle tells us, *Heb. i. 1. God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets.* God revealed himself as at several times, by several steps and degrees: so in various manners; sometimes by visions, sometimes by dreams, sometimes by oracles, sometimes by a spirit of prophecy, and sometimes by a voice from heaven, sometimes by a secret and gentle inspiration. Now it matters not which of these ways God chuseth to reveal himself to us, provided we have sufficient evidence and grounds of assurance that the thing is revealed by God.

As to us, these extraordinary ways of revelation are now ceased, and we have a fixed and standing revelation, that is, the records of those revelations which God formerly made to holy men; and this is the holy scriptures, or the bible, which is a system or collection of things supernaturally revealed.

Now if this faith be considered as restrained to a part of divine revelation, *viz. the doctrine of the gospel, revealed to the world by Jesus Christ,* then it is properly *christian faith*, which frequently in the new testament is called *faith*, *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, by way of excellency and eminency, this being the most eminent and perfect revelation which God hath made of himself to the world, which the apostle

apostle at the beginning of this epistle advanceth above all those former revelations which God had made of himself to the fathers, those being by his servants and ministers, prophets and angels: *But in these last days God hath revealed himself to us by his son, whom he hath made heir of all things*, and advanced to a dignity above that of men or angels.

And with relation to this *faith* of the gospel, christians are peculiarly and eminently called *believers*. 1 Theff. ii. 10. *You know how unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe*, that is, among you christians. 2 Theff. i. 10. *When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe*, meaning the christians that entertain the gospel. And upon the same account the apostle calls the whole society. or body of christians, *the household of faith*, Gal. vi. 10.

But now I am considering *faith*, not in this more narrow and restrained sense, for a belief or persuasion of the doctrine of the gospel; but in a more large and comprehensive sense, for a persuasion of all things that are supernaturally revealed, that is of all things contained in the holy scriptures.

Now all the matters of divine revelation, which are contained in the book of holy scripture, may, I think, be reduced to one of these *six* heads.

1. They are either a history, or relation of some person, or matter of fact: and a *faith* of the historical part of scripture, is nothing else but a persuasion that those narrations, or relations, are true. Or,

2. A prophecy, or prediction of some event. Now a *faith* of the prophetic part of scripture, is a persuasion that the event foretold will certainly come to pass. Or,

3. A doctrine: such as are all those propositions in scripture, which declare to us the nature or properties of God, the nature and office of Christ, that he is the eternal Son of God, that is, true God, the *Messias*, or Saviour of the world, the king, priest, and prophet of his church, and the like. Now a *faith* of the doctrinal part of scripture, is a persuasion, that those propositions which contain these doctrines are true. Or,

4. Laws for the ordering and governing of our spirits and lives, under which I comprehend all the precepts and prohibitions of scripture, which are the matter of our duty. Now a *faith* of these, is a persuasion, that God hath commanded, and forbidden such things; and consequently that they are necessary to be observed by us. Or,

5. Promises of good things, either with relation to this life or the other. Now a *faith* of the promises, is a persuasion or confident expectation that they will be accomplished. And thus the apostle describes the faith of the promises of another world, at the first *ver.* of this chapter, that it is the *substance of things hoped for*, *ὑπόστασις*, that is, a *confident expectation* that the promises of the gospel, which are the matter of our hope, shall be accomplished; *and the evidence of things not seen*, a being convinced of the certainty and reality of future and invisible things. And thus likewise the apostle explains to us the faith of *Abraham*, in reference to the promises of God, to give him a son, Rom. iv. 21, *He was fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able to perform*. Or,

6. Threatenings. Now a *faith* of the threatenings, is a persuasion of the danger we incur, if we neglect our duty; that is, a belief that God justly may, and will (having confirmed his threatenings with an oath, which is a sign of the immutable determination of the divine will) inflict those punishments upon us, which he hath threatened, in case we disobey his laws. These *six* heads do, I think, contain all, I am sure the most principal matters of divine revelation; which I have the more carefully distinguished, because some of them are of a distinct and peculiar consideration from the rest, as will afterwards appear.

Having thus, as plainly and briefly as I could, opened to you, what I mean by this *second* sort of divine faith, which is a persuasion of things supernaturally revealed, I come now to satisfy such enquiries about this, as may be most material. And here I shall proceed upon those heads of enquiry which I handled when I spake of the *first* sort of divine faith.

I. Whether this may truly and properly be called *faith*?

II. What is the argument whereby this faith is wrought?

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III. Whether

III. Whether it admit of degrees, and what are the differences of them?

IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of this faith?

V. In what respects it may be said to be *divine*.

I. Whether this may truly and properly be called *faith*? And that it may, is evident, because the general definition of *faith* agrees to it: for a man may be persuaded in his mind concerning things supernaturally revealed; and the scripture every where calls a persuasion of these matters by the name of *faith*. But besides this, it seems this is the adequate and only notion of *faith*, as it hath been fixed by the schools, and is become a term of art. For the definition that the schools give of *faith* is this; that it is *an assent to a thing credible, as credible*. Now, say they, that is *credible* which relies upon the testimony of a credible person; and consequently a *human faith* is that which relies upon human testimony; and a *divine faith*, that which relies upon the testimony or authority of God: which definition, though it be short and imperfect, (being indeed not a definition of *faith* in general, but of a particular kind of *faith*, *viz.* that which is wrought by the argument which we call *testimony* or *authority*, and consequently excludes a belief of the principles of natural religion, and a belief that the scriptures are the word of God, from being *faith*) yet this shews thus much, that all agree in this, that a persuasion of things supernaturally revealed, is truly and properly *faith*.

II. What is the argument whereby this faith or persuasion of things supernaturally revealed, is wrought in us? And this, by the general consent of all, is the testimony or authority of God, some way or other revealing these things to us; whose infallible and unerring knowledge, together with his goodness and authority, gives us the highest assurance, that he neither can be deceived himself, nor will deceive us in any thing that he reveals to us. I say, the testimony or authority of God some way or other revealing things to us, is the argument whereby a faith of any supernatural revelation is wrought in us: but if we restrain all supernatural revelations to the bible, as I told you we know of no other, then the particular kind of testimony whereby this faith is wrought in us is the written word of God.

III. As to the degrees of this faith. Supposing men sufficiently satisfied that the scriptures are the word of God, that is, a divine revelation; then all those who are sufficiently satisfied of this, do equally believe the things contained in the scriptures. For if men be once fully satisfied that God hath spoken any thing, I think no man makes the least doubt but what God says is true. Now there can be no degrees of faith, where there is no doubt of the contrary; all the degrees that are in faith, arising from a greater or less mixture of doubting. So that those who do not at all doubt but that the scriptures are the word of God, have the same degree of persuasion concerning the matters contained in them: and that no man doubts whether what God says is true, ariseth from the fixed and constant notion which men universally have of God, that he is infallible and true. Therefore we find, *Matt. xxi 25.* when our Saviour puts the dilemma to the Pharisees, concerning the baptism of *John*, *whether it were from heaven, or of men?* That they reasoned with themselves, saying, *if we shall say from heaven; he will say unto us, why then did ye not believe him?* Which kind of reasoning imports thus much, that it is universally acknowledged, that no man can in reason make the least doubt of that which he believes to be from God. Therefore a man would wonder what *Becanus* the Jesuit meant, unless it were to abuse the prophets and apostles, when he says, *Tom. iii. of his school-divinity*, that the prophets and apostles had *evidentiam revelationis, non autem evidentiam primæ veritatis: tametsi enim evidenter cognoscerent Deum esse, qui ipsis revelabat mysteria fidei, non tamen evidenter cognoscebant Deum esse summe veracem, qui nec falli potuit, nec fallere*; that is, "Though it was sufficiently evident to the prophets and apostles, that those revelations which they had were from God; yet it was not evident to them, that divine revelations are true; for though they did evidently know, that there was a God, who revealed to them the mysteries of faith; yet they did not evidently know that God was infallible and true, who could neither deceive, nor be deceived." By which he doth not only make the prophets and apostles idiots, and destitute of one of the most common notions

tions of human nature, which is, *that God is infallible and true*; but he doth likewise make all divine revelation useless, and to no purpose. For to what purpose is it for a man to be satisfied, that God reveals such a thing to him; if he be in the mean time unsatisfied, whether what God reveals is true? for no man that is unsatisfied, whether what God reveals be true, can upon any tolerable ground of reason, yield a firm assent to a divine revelation. But it is pity to spend time in confuting any thing which confutes itself by its own absurdity, and its direct contradiction to the common notions of human nature. I proceed therefore.

Supposing any man be unsatisfied, and do make any doubt whether these books called the holy scriptures, or any of them, be the word of God, that is, a divine revelation; proportionably to the degree of his doubting concerning the divine authority of the scriptures, there will be an abatement of his faith, as to the things contained in them: for he that believes a thing merely upon the credit or testimony of such a person; so much reason as he hath to doubt, whether such a person did speak, or testify such a thing; so much reason he hath to doubt whether the thing be true.

And upon this account I think it is, that the scripture speaks of degrees of faith, of growing and increasing in faith, of a strong faith, that is, such a faith, as was either wholly, or in a great measure, free from doubting; and of a weak faith, that is, such a faith as had a great mixture of doubting; by which we are not to understand, that they doubted of the truth of any thing of which they were satisfied by a divine revelation; but that they doubted whether such things were divine revelations or not. So that the great doubt of the disciples was, whether Christ were the true *Messias*, and really the Son of God; for so far as they were satisfied of that, they could not doubt of any thing he said.

IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of this *faith*? The proper and genuine effects of the belief of the scriptures in general, is the conformity of our hearts and lives to what we believe; that is, to be such persons, and to live such lives, as it becomes those who do heartily believe, and are really persuaded of the truth of the scriptures. And if this be a constant and abiding persuasion, it will produce this effect; but with more or less difficulty, according to the disposition of the subject, and the weakness or strength of contrary habits and inclinations. More particularly the effects of this faith are according to the nature of the matter believed. If it be a history or relation of things past, or prophecy of things to come; it hath an effect upon men so far as the history or prophecy doth concern them. If it be a doctrine; it hath the effect which the particular nature and tendency of such a doctrine requires. For instance, the doctrine of God's goodness is apt to enflame us with love to him; of his power and justice, with a fear and awe of him. This doctrine, that Christ is the Saviour of the world, the proper effect of it is to make men rely upon him for salvation; and so of the rest. If it be a precept; the proper effect of it is obedience: and hence it is that unbelief and disobedience are frequently put for one another in scripture; and disobedience is opposed to faith, 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, &c.* where the disobedient are opposed to them that believe. And so likewise those who neglect any duty of religion, and do any thing notoriously unworthy of their profession, are said to *deny the faith*, 1 Tim. v. 8. *But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith.* How does he *deny the faith*? In disobeying the precepts of the christian religion, which chargeth us with such natural and moral duties. If it be a promise, the proper effect of it is, encouragement to obedience by hopes of the thing promised. If a threatening; the proper effect of it is to restrain men from sin and disobedience.

V. In what sense this faith of things supernaturally revealed, may be said to be a *divine faith*? *Answ.* Not only in respect of the matter and object of it, which are divine things, such as concern God and religion; and in respect of the divine effects it hath upon those who believe these things; (for in these two respects a persuasion of the principles of natural religion, may be said to be a *divine faith*) but likewise in respect of the argument whereby it is wrought, which is a divine testimony.

testimony. As for the efficient cause, the spirit of God, that does not immediately belong to this: for the spirit of God doth not, speaking properly, persuade us immediately of the truth of things supernaturally reveal'd; but mediately, by persuading us of the truth of the revelation: for to believe a thing to be true, which we are persuaded is revealed by God, is so natural and consequent upon such a persuasion, that it doth not seem to require any new work of the spirit. And if this be all the work of the spirit, to persuade men that such a revelation is divine; it will be most proper to speak of this, when I come to the *Third* sort of faith, which is a persuasion of a divine revelation that it is such: which because it hath many difficulties in it, deserves a more large and particular consideration.

S E R M O N CLXVII.

Of the Faith or Persuasion of a Divine Revelation.

H E B. xi. 6.

But without Faith it is impossible to please God.

*The third
Sermon on
this Text.*

I H A V E observed that a *religious* and *divine faith* comprehends under it *three* things.

First, A persuasion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature.

Secondly, A persuasion of things supernatural and revealed.

Thirdly, A persuasion of supernatural revelation.

The *two* former of these I have considered, and now proceed to the

Third sort of faith, which I call *divine* or *religious*; viz. a persuasion concerning a divine revelation, that it is such; which I distinguish from the former thus. The former is a persuasion concerning the things which are revealed from God, that they are true: this is a persuasion concerning the revelation itself, that it is divine and from God.

For the opening of this there are many things to be taken into consideration.

I. What we understand by a divine revelation.

II. The several kinds of it.

III. Whether a persuasion concerning a divine revelation be properly *faith*.

IV. How we may come to be assured of a divine revelation, or by what arguments a faith or persuasion of a divine revelation is wrought in us.

V. The degrees of this persuasion or assurance.

VI. The effects of it.

VII. In what sense it may be said to be a *divine faith*; under which I shall speak something concerning the testimony of the spirit.

I. What we are to understand by a divine revelation. *Answ.* A supernatural discovery or manifestation of things to us. I say supernatural, because it may either be immediately by God, or by the mediation of angels: as most, if not all the revelations of the old testament were; a supernatural discovery, or manifestation, either immediately to our minds, and inward faculties; (for I do not so well understand the distinction between *understanding* and *imagination*, as to be careful to take notice of it;) or else mediately to our understandings, by the mediation of our outward senses, as by an external appearance to our bodily eyes, or by a voice and sound to the sense of hearing. But of this I have discoursed in a former *sermon**, and therefore shall add no more here.

* See Vol
II. Sermon.
73.

II. For the several kinds of divine revelation ; of this also I have formerly ^{† See Vol. II. Serm.} discoursed at large. 73.

III. Whether a persuasion of a divine revelation may properly be called *faith*? To this I answer, that according to the streight and narrow notion of faith, which the schools have fixed, which is an assent to any thing grounded upon the testimony, and authority of God revealing it, a persuasion of a divine revelation cannot properly be called faith ; because it is irrational to expect that a man should have another divine revelation to assure him that this is a divine revelation : for then, for the same reason, I must expect another divine revelation to assure me of that, and so without end. But I have sufficiently shewn, that this is not the true notion of faith in general, but only of a particular kind of faith ; *viz.* that which is wrought by the argument, which we call testimony or authority. But according to the true and general notion of faith, which is *a persuasion of the mind concerning any thing*, a persuasion of the mind concerning a divine revelation, may as properly be called *faith*, as any thing else, if men will but grant, that a man may be so satisfied, concerning a divine revelation, as verily to believe and be persuaded that it is so.

IV. How we may come to be persuaded of a divine revelation, that it is such ; or by what arguments this persuasion is wrought in us? For answer to this, it will be requisite distinctly to consider,

First, The persons to whom a divine revelation is immediately made, what assurance they can have of it. And,

Secondly, what assurance other persons can have of it. I say these are distinctly to be considered. because there is a very different account to be given of them.

First, As to those persons to whom the revelation is immediately made, the question is, By what arguments or means they may come to be assured, that any revelation which they have, is really and truly such, and not a delusion or imposture. The *Jewish* doctors tell us, that some kind of divine revelations do not carry full assurance along with them, that they are divine ; such are dreams and visions, as they are distinguished from prophecy : and as to that kind of revelation, which they strictly call prophecy, they give several characteristical notes to distinguish true divine revelation from delusion ; such as these ; that the spirit of delusion only works upon the imagination, and the lower faculties ; the divine spirit of prophecy upon the understanding and reasonable part of the soul : that delusive inspirations were accompanied with alienation of mind, which did discover itself either in *rage* and *fury*, or *melancholy* ; but the true prophetic spirit is always consistent with the use of reason and understanding. They distinguish them likewise by the manner of their seizing upon them ; that in the beginning of inspirations the prophets use to have some apparition, or to hear some voice, either articulate in words, or inarticulate by thunder, or the sound of a trumpet, which in the *Revelations* doth frequently precede St *John's* visions ; and by these they were assured that they were divine. And lastly ; that a divine inspiration did always carry along with it a strong evidence of its original, and that by the vigour and strength of its impression, they were fully assured and satisfied beyond all doubt and hesitation : thus they. But all that I shall say by way of answer to this question, shall be in these *two* propositions.

1. If we believe any such thing as divine revelation, we cannot doubt but those who have it, are some way or other fully satisfied of it. The reason is evident ; because otherwise it would be in vain, and to no purpose, and could not possibly attain its end. A divine revelation cannot possibly signify any thing, or in reason have any effect upon a man, unless he be satisfied it is such : for so long as he does not know but that it is a delusion, he will not attend to it, or regard it. So that the distinction of the *Jewish* doctors between dreams and visions, and prophecy, that this carries always full assurance with it, the other not, is vain and unreasonable.

2. The means whereby this assurance of a divine revelation is wrought, is most probably the evidence it carries along with it, whereby it did fully satisfy the person that had it, of its divine original. That God can accompany his own revelations with such a clear and over-powering light as shall discover to us the divinity

nity of them, and satisfy us beyond all doubt and scruple, I think no man can doubt, that considers the vast power and influence which he must needs have over our understandings, who made them, and knows the frame of them: and if this be granted, it is not necessary to explain the particular way how it is done, it being a thing not to be expressed in words, but to be felt and experienced. So that the argument, whereby this persuasion of a divine revelation is wrought in those that have it, is inward experience of the full satisfaction and assurance, which they find to be supernaturally wrought in them, that is, of which they can give no account from themselves. And this is not a stubborn belief, and an obstinate conceit of a thing: but a good man, who is inspired, when he reflects upon himself, and this assurance which he finds in himself, he can give a rational account of it to himself. Thus he finds that it is a foreign impression, and doth not spring from himself, nor hath its rise from thence; therefore he ascribes it to some spirit without himself; and he believes that there is a God that can communicate himself to the minds and spirits of men: and that his goodness is such, that he will not suffer them to be under a necessity of delusion, which they must be, if when they have the highest assurance and satisfaction, that such a thing is a divine revelation, they may be deceived. And then likewise he considers the matter of the revelation, which if it do not contradict any essential and necessary fundamental notion of his understanding, he thinks himself bound to entertain it upon this assurance.

I say, *good* men may give themselves this rational satisfaction: for I grant a *wicked* man, that rejects and disobeyes the truth of God, may so provoke him, as to give him up to strong delusions, to believe lies; and he may be as confident of a lie, as a *good* man is of truth. But as this is not unjust from God in reference to the persons, so it is no prejudice to the assurance which *good* men may have of divine revelation.

And this assurance is such, as it is not in the power of any evil spirit to convey to us, concerning a delusion; or if it be in his power, he is not permitted to do it to any who have not highly provoked God, by rejecting the truth, to give them up to strong delusions, to believe lies: and that such persons should be obnoxious to such delusions, as it is not unjust in reference to them, so neither is it any prejudice to the assurance which good men may have of such revelations, which are truly and really divine.

But for the other ways of discerning true revelation from false, which the *Jews* mention; as that the Spirit of God always works upon the understanding, as well as the imagination, and in consequence with the use of reason and understanding, and gives some sensible notice of its seizing upon men, I think all these to be uncertain if they be examined. And if the *last* which they mention. *viz.* this that I have insisted upon, be true, all the other are superfluous. For what need of any other sign to assure a man that that is a divine revelation, which carries along with it a clear satisfaction and full assurance that it is such?

So that it remains now, that we fix upon some particular ways whereby the person that hath a divine revelation may be assured of it; and this I shall do by these propositions.

First, That God can work in the mind of man a firm persuasion of a thing, by giving him a clear and vigorous perception of it; and if so, then God can accompany his own revelations with such a clear and over-powering light as shall discover to us the divinity of them, and satisfy us thereof beyond all doubt and scruple. And this no man can doubt of, that considers the vast power and influence which God, who made the soul of man, and perfectly knows the frame of it, must needs have upon the mind and understanding of man.

Secondly, God never persuades a man of any thing that contradicts the natural and essential notions of his mind and understanding. For this would be to destroy his own workmanship, and to impose that upon the understanding of a man, which whilst it retains its own nature, and remains what it is, it cannot possibly admit. For instance, we cannot imagine that God can persuade any man that there is no God; for he that believes any thing as from God, must necessarily believe there is a God; therefore it is impossible that he can be persuaded of this as from

from God, that there is no God; and that he is not wise and just, and good and powerful; and that he is not to be honoured and loved by all reasonable creatures: because these do clearly and immediately contradict the most essential and fundamental notions of our minds concerning God, and the respect which is due to him: not only because it is unworthy of God to go about to persuade a man of a falsehood; but because it is impossible in the nature of the thing, that the mind of man, which is naturally prepossessed with contrary notions, should, whilst it retains its own nature, admit of such as do clearly and immediately contradict them. For if these be natural notions, that there is a God, that he must be wise and just, and good and powerful, and ought to be honoured and loved by his creatures; the mind of man cannot possibly admit of any contrary persuasions and impressions: for the former-persuasions being natural to us, will always remain while our nature remains, and if any persuasions contrary to these could be wrought upon our minds, they would signify nothing, but would mutually destroy one another. For if any man that is persuaded that God is good, (as every man is, that is persuaded he is at all) could, during the persuasion, be likewise of a contrary persuasion, that he is not good; this latter persuasion would signify nothing: for he is not persuaded that God is not good, whilst he retains this persuasion that he is good.

Thirdly, supposing the thing revealed do not contradict the essential notions of our minds, no good and holy man hath reason to doubt of any thing, whether it be a revelation from God or not, of which he hath a clear and vigorous perception, and full satisfaction in his own mind that it is such. For if a man may have reason to doubt of any thing, whereof he hath a clear perception, then no man can be certain of any thing. Now that there is such a thing as certainty, is now supposed, and not to be proved. I say, a *good* and *holy* man can have no reason to doubt: for a *wicked* man (I grant) may, by a sinful rejection of, and disobedience to the truth, so far provoke God, as to give him up to strong delusions to believe lies; and he may be as confident of a lie, as any *good* man is of the truth.

And as this is not unjust from God in reference to *wicked* men, so it is no prejudice to the assurance which good men may have concerning a divine revelation.

Fourthly, A *good* and *holy* man reflecting upon this assurance and persuasion that he hath, may be able to give himself a reasonable account of it, and satisfy himself that it is not a *stubborn belief* and an *obstinate conceit* of things without any ground or reason. A good man is secretly and within himself persuaded, that God hath revealed to him such a thing; reflecting upon this persuasion, he finds that it is a foreign impression, and doth not spring from his own mind: now he believing that there is a God, who can, and probably doth communicate and reveal himself to the minds of good men; and being withal satisfied that his goodness is such, that he will not suffer good men, who do heartily and sincerely desire to know his Will, to be under a necessity of delusion, (which they unavoidably are, if they may then be deceived, when they have the greatest assurance and clearest satisfaction that such a thing is revealed to them of God;) from hence he reasonably concludes, that he ought not to question the matter any farther. I might instance in the revelation made to *Abraham*, concerning the sacrificing his son, which hath the greatest difficulty in it of any case I know of: but of that I have elsewhere discoursed at large*. Thus much for the *first*.

* See Ser.
II. of Vol.
II.

Secondly, What assurance can other persons, who have not the revelation immediately made to them, have of a divine revelation? To this I shall answer by these propositions.

1. That there are some means whereby a man may be assured of another's revelation that it is divine. For,

(1.) Otherwise it would signify nothing, but only to the person that immediately had it; which would make void the chief end of most revelations, which are seldom made to particular persons for their own sakes only, but for the most part, on purpose, that they may be made known to others, which could not effectually be done, unless there be some means whereby men may be assured of revelations made to another.

(2.) None could be guilty of unbelief but those who had immediate revelation made to them. For no man is guilty of unbelief that is not obliged to believe: but

but no man can be under any obligation to believe any thing, who hath not sufficient means whereby he may be assured that such a thing is true.

2. The private assurance and satisfaction of another concerning a revelation made to him, can signify nothing at all to me, to assure me of it. For what satisfaction is it to me, that another may say, he hath a revelation, unless I have some means to be assured that what he saith is true? For if I must believe every spirit, that is, every man that says he is inspired, I lie open to all possible impostures and delusions, and must believe every one that either foolishly conceits, or falsely pretends that he hath a revelation: for both the conceited and pretended enthusiast will say they have revelations, with as much confidence as those who are truly and divinely inspired: and to take every man's word in matters of such huge consequence and importance as revelation from God ought to be presumed to be, would not be *faith*, but credulity, that is, an ungrounded persuasion; which how severely God punished, you may see in that famous instance, 1 *Kings* xiii. where the prophet that was sent to *Bethel*, is upon his return torn in pieces by a lion, because of his credulity and easy belief of a pretended revelation. I confess this case is somewhat different from theirs who simply believe a pretended revelation, as being complicated with some other aggravating circumstances. For he had an immediate revelation from God, *not to eat, nor drink at Bethel; nor to return the same way that he came*: upon his return an old prophet meets him, and tells him that an angel had appeared to him, and had bid him to bring him back, and to cause him to eat and drink; he believes him, and turns in with him. Now this was the aggravation of his credulity, that when he himself had had an express revelation from God, concerning which he was satisfied, he hearkened to the pretended revelation of another, concerning which he had no assurance in contradiction to a divine revelation, which he knew to be such. Not but that the command which God had given him was in its own nature revokable, and God might have countermanded it by another immediate revelation to him, or by an equivalent, that is, a miracle wrought by the prophet who pretended to countermand it from God, *Unumquodque dissolvitur eo modo qui ligatur*, the obligation which was brought upon him by an immediate revelation, could not be dissolved but by another immediate revelation, or evidence equivalent to it. However, this instance serves in the general to my purpose, that a man may be faulty by credulity as well as by unbelief: and as a man ought not to disbelieve where there is sufficient evidence; so neither ought he to believe any thing without sufficient grounds of assurance.

3. That miracles wrought for the confirmation of any divine testimony or revelation made to another, are a sufficient means, whereby those who have not the divine revelation immediately made to them, may be assured that it is divine; I say these are sufficient means of assurance in this case. I do not say they are the only means: (for it does not become men to limit the power and wisdom of God) but I do not know of any other means of assurance upon which men can securely rely; and it is a great presumption that this is the best and fittest, if not the only means, because the wisdom of God has always pitch'd upon it, and constantly made use of it, and no other. Under miracles I comprehend the prediction of future events, which God claims as a peculiar prerogative to himself, because such things are out of the reach of any created understanding; and therefore in the prophet *Isaiah* he challengeth the idols of the heathens to give this testimony, or argument of their divinity; *Shew us things that are to come, that we may know that ye are Gods*.

But here we must distinguish between *doubtful* and *unquestionable* Miracles. I call those *doubtful* miracles, which though a man cannot tell how they can be done by any natural power, yet do not carry that full conviction with them, as to be universally owned and acknowledged for arguments of a divine power. Such were those which the magicians did by their enchantments. I call those *unquestionable*, which, considering their quality and number, and the publick manner of doing them, are out of all question. Such were the miracles of *Moses*, and our *Saviour*. Now a *doubtful*, and a *single*, and a *private* wonder, or miracle, as I may call it, can give no confirmation to any thing in opposition to a revelation, or a doctrine confirmed by *many*, and *publick* and *unquestionable* miracles.

Upon

Upon this account *Moses* forbids the children of *Israel* to hearken to any prophet that should come to seduce them to idolatry; yea, tho' he should give a *sign* or *wonder*, and the *sign* or *wonder* should come to pass, Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3, 4. Now here lies the strength of the reason, *Because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage*; that is, because he contradicts the great revelation which God made of himself, and confirmed by such a succession of so many, and so great miracles; the credit of which revelation ought not in reason to be called in question upon the working of a single and a private wonder, which we could not distinguish from a miracle. Upon the same account St. Paul, Gal. i. 8. says, *Though an angel from heaven should preach any other doctrine than that which had been preached unto them, he should be accursed*; that is, after so clear and great confirmation, as was given to the gospel, a contrary doctrine, though it should come from an angel, should be rejected as execrable.

But you will say, suppose such a prophet as *Moses* speaks of here, such an angel as St. Paul mentions, should work as many and as great miracles as *Moses* and *Christ* wrought, should we then believe them?

I answer; this is not to be supposed: for supposing the providence of God in the world, it cannot be imagined that an equal attestation should be given to a false doctrine and a true. But that the greatest and most unquestionable miracles are to carry it, is evident; because this is all the reason why *Moses* was to be credited above the magicians, because he wrought more and greater wonders than they did. But if it could be supposed that any one could work as great miracles for the confirmation of idolatry, as were wrought by way of attestation to the true worship of God, then there would be no difference, but what the reason of the thing makes; the belief of one God being more reasonable than many; and not to make an image or sensible representation of a spirit, being more reasonable than to make one. But if this could be supposed, the natural issue and consequence of it would be atheism, a man would believe neither that nor the other, nor that there is any God at all.

But a farther account of the nature and difference of miracles, I reserve to some * particular discourses on that subject. At present for the fuller opening of this matter, it will be proper to shew,

1. That the divine authority both of the doctrine of *Moses* and *Christ* is resolved into miracles.
 2. What assurance of miracles is sufficient to persuade men to believe that testimony for the confirmation of which they are wrought.
 3. What assurance they give us, that the scriptures are a *divine revelation*.
- But the consideration of these I refer to the next opportunity.

* See Sermons on Heb. ii. 4. in this Vol.

S E R M O N CLXVIII.

Of the Faith or Persuasion of a Divine Revelation.

H E B. xi. 6.

But without Faith it is impossible to please God.

I N discoursing of the faith or persuasion of a *divine revelation*, I proposed the considering these seven things.

The fourth Sermon on this Text.

I. What we understand by a *divine revelation*.

II. The several kinds of it.

III. Whether a persuasion concerning a *divine revelation* be properly *faith*.

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IV. How

IV. How we may come to be assured of a *divine revelation*; or by what arguments a *faith* or persuasion of a *divine revelation* is wrought in us.

V. The degrees of this persuasion or assurance.

VI. The effects of it.

VII. In what sense it may be said to be a *divine faith*.

I was upon the [IVth] of these, *viz.* Considering by what arguments faith or persuasion of a *divine revelation* is wrought in us; which led me to consider the evidence of miracles; and I proposed to shew particularly these *three* things.

1. That the divine authority both of the doctrine of *Moses* and *Christ*, is resolved into miracles.

2. What assurance of miracles is sufficient to persuade men to believe that testimony for the confirmation of which they are wrought.

3. What assurance they give us, that the scriptures are a *divine revelation*.

I proceed to treat of these in their order.

1. I shall shew that the divine authority both of the doctrine of *Moses* and of *Christ*, is resolved into miracles. We find the scripture lays the whole weight of the divine authority both of the law and gospel, of the revelation of the old and new testament, upon this evidence. *Exod. iv. 1, 2, 3.* When God sends *Moses*, he objects, *that they will not believe him, nor hearken to him, but will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto him.* Thereupon God gives him a power of miracles, that they may believe *that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hath appeared unto him*; and by the evidence of those miracles which he wrought, he prevailed over the magicians. And generally throughout the story of the old testament we find all persons yielding to the evidence of miracles, as a sufficient attestation to a prophet and his message. When *Elijah* had prevailed with God in a miraculous manner to confirm his own worship, and confute the worship of *Baal*, by sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, the people yield to this evidence, and cry out, *The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God,* *1 Kings xviii. 39.* When *Elijah* raised the woman's son, then she owned him for a prophet, *1 Kings xvii. 24.* *Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true.* So likewise *Naaman* was convinced by the miraculous cure which the prophet *Elisha* wrought on him, *2 Kings v. 15.* *Behold! now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel.*

And so likewise the divinity of our Saviour and his doctrine is resolved into the evidence of his miracles. This is the evidence *Christ* gives of himself, when *John* sent his disciples to enquire whether he was the *Messias*, *Matt. xi. 2.* *Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come: or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear, and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* So *John v. 36.* *But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* *Chap. x. 25.* *Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed it not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me, Verse 37, 38.* *If I do not the works of my Father; believe me not: but if I do; tho' ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.* *Chap. xiv. 11.* *Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works sake.* *Chap. xx. 30, 31.* *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life thro' his name.* And from hence our Saviour aggravates the unbelief, and impenitency of the *Jews*, because they resisted this highest evidence, *Mat. xi. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.* *Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Wo unto thee Chorazin, wo unto thee Bethsaida: for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought*

brought down to hell. For if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. John xv. 24. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did; they had not had sin: but now have they both seen, and hated both me and my Father. And so the apostle tells us, that miracles are the great confirmation of the gospel, and are so clear an evidence of the truth of it, that they render all unbelievers inexcusable, Heb. ii. 2, 3. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?

In particular, the great weight of the gospel is laid upon the miracle of Christ's resurrection from the dead, which our Saviour mentions as the only sign that should be given to that generation, that is, the clearest. And the apostle. Rom. i. 4. saith, That he was declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. This puts it out of all question. And St. Paul, in his sermon to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 30, 31. insists upon this as the great evidence; And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And this was the proper work of the apostles, to be witnesses to the world of this great miracle, Acts i. 21, 22. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. So St. Peter, in his sermon, Acts ii. 32. Him hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. And to mention no more, Acts x. 38, 39, 40, 41. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Hierusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

2. What assurance of miracles is sufficient to persuade men to believe the revelation or testimony, for the confirmation of which they are wrought. Of this assurance there are three degrees, all which do oblige men to believe the divine revelation for which they are wrought.

(1.) If we have the evidence of our own senses for it, that is, if we see them wrought. This evidence the disciples of our Lord had, and the Jews, and therefore their unbelief was inexcusable; and the blaspheming the Spirit whereby they saw such miracles to be wrought, was the sin against the Holy Ghost.

(2.) If we have the credible report of eye-witnesses of those miracles, who are credible persons, and we have no reason to doubt of their testimony; that is, if we have the report of them immediately from the mouth of those who were eye-witnesses of them. That this lays likewise an obligation on men to believe, appears by our Saviour's reproof of Thomas, who would not believe except he himself saw: but most expressly from that text, Mark xvi. 14. He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

(3.) If the credible report of eye-witnesses concerning such miracles be conveyed to us in such a manner, and with so much evidence, as we have no reason to doubt of it. For why should we not believe a credible report conveyed to us in such a manner, as we have no reason to question, but that it hath been faithfully conveyed and transmitted to us? St. John thought this to be assurance sufficient to induce belief, John xx. 31. But these things were written that ye might believe, &c. And this is that assurance which we, who live at this distance from the age of Christ and his apostles, have of the miracles wrought in confirmation of the gospel. I shall have occasion to enlarge upon these heads hereafter.

3. What assurance *miracles* give us, that the scriptures are a *divine revelation*. And this contains *four* distinct questions in it.

1. What assurance we have from hence, that the doctrine contained in the scripture is from God? To which the answer is easy; because these *miracles* were wrought for the confirmation of this doctrine.

2. The question is, what assurance the *miracles* give us, that those persons who are said to be the pen-men of the several books of scripture, were really so? To this I answer: none at all: for I do not know of any miracle that was wrought to prove *Moses* wrote the pentateuch, or that *St. Matthew* wrote the gospel which goes under his name. But if the question be, How then am I assured of this? I answer, by credible and uncontroll'd report. It bears his name; and hath always been received for his; and if this will not satisfy, I cannot prove it farther; it is too late now to prove it by any other argument. *St. Matthew* is dead, and those who saw him write it, and those who received it from them; so that we cannot go to enquire of them in order to our satisfaction: but the best of it is, that as it cannot now be proved at this distance otherwise than by constant and uncontroll'd report; so no man at this distance can have any reason to doubt of it; and so long as no man can have reason to doubt of it, there can be no need of proving it; especially considering that it is by no means necessary to salvation, to believe that *St. Matthew* wrote the history of the gospel; but only to believe what he wrote.

3. The question is, What assurance *miracles* give, that those persons who are said to be the pen-men of the books of scripture were divinely inspired? The *miracles* (under which I comprehend the prediction of future events) which *Moses* and the *prophets* and the *apostles* wrought, were testimonies from heaven, that they were divine persons, and that what they said was to be credited, and consequently if they gave out themselves for such, that they were such. That the pen-men of the new testament were persons endued with a miraculous power, is plain, because they were most of them apostles: and for the rest we have no reason to doubt of it; those extraordinary gifts being so common in the primitive times: however, so long as there is nothing in the rest, that is dissonant from, or contrary to what those wrote, of whose inspirations we are assured, and these their writings have always been received in the church as of divine inspiration, which we may well presume was not rashly done, and without grounds, we have no reason to doubt as to them: or if they were, so long as they contain nothing that is contrary to those who were unquestionably inspired, the matter is of no dangerous consequence. And as for the pen-men of the old testament, we are assured that they were all inspired, by one in the new testament, that was unquestionably so; *St. Paul*, who tells us, *That all scripture is of divine inspiration*, meaning the books of the old testament which were called by that name, κατ' ἐξοχήν, or by way of eminency.

But if any one enquire farther, how far the pen-men of scripture were inspired in the writing of those books? whether only so far as to be secured from mistake in the delivery of any message or doctrine from God, or in the relation of any history, or matter of fact; yet so, as they were left every man to his own style and manner of expression? or that every thing they wrote was immediately dictated to them, and that not only the sense of it, but the very words and phrases by which they express things, and that they were merely instruments or pen-men, I shall not take upon me to determine; I shall only say this in general, that considering the end of this inspiration, which was to inform the world certainly of the mind and will of God, it is necessary for every man to believe that the inspired pen-men of scripture were so far assisted as was necessary to this end: and he that thinks upon good grounds that this end cannot be secured, unless every word and syllable were immediately dictated, he hath reason to believe it was so; but if any man upon good grounds thinks the end of writing the scripture may be sufficiently secured without that, he hath no reason to conclude, that God, who is not wanting in what is necessary, is guilty of doing what is superfluous. And if any man is of opinion that *Moses* might write the history of those actions which he himself did or was present at, without an immediate revelation of them; or that *Solomon* by his natural and acquired wisdom might speak those wise sayings which are in his *proverbs*: or the *evangelists* might write what they heard and saw,
or

or what they had good assurance of from others, as St. *Luke* tells he did; or that St. *Paul* might write for his cloak and parchments at *Troas*, and salute by name his friends and brethren, or that he might advise *Timothy* to drink a little wine, &c. without the immediate dictate of the Spirit of God, he seems to have reason on his side. For that men may, without an immediate revelation, write those things which they think without a revelation, seems very plain. And that they did so, there is this probable argument for it, because we find that the evangelists in relating the discourses of Christ, are very far from agreeing in the particular expressions and words, though they do agree in the substance of the discourses: but if the words had been dictated by the Spirit of God, they must have agreed in them. For when St. *Luke* differs from St. *Matthew*, in relating what our Saviour said, it is impossible that they should both relate it right as to the very words and form of expression; but they both relate the substance of what he said. And if it had been of concernment, that every thing that they wrote should be dictated *ad apicem*, to a tittle, by the Spirit of God, it is of the same concernment still, that the providence of God should have secured the scriptures since to a tittle from the least alteration: which that it is not done, appears by the various readings both of the old and new testament, concerning which, no man can infallibly say, that this is right, and not the other. It seems sufficient in this matter to assert, that the Spirit of God did reveal to the pen-men of the scriptures what was necessary to be revealed: and as to all other things, that he did superintend them in the writing of it, so far as to secure them from any material error or mistake in what they have delivered. Or,

4. If the question be, What assurance we have from miracles, that all those books which we receive are canonical? To this I answer, I do not know of any miracle that was ever wrote on purpose to confirm the canon of the scriptures: but as for the books of the old testament, we have sufficient assurance, that those which we now receive, are those which the *Jews* received for such in our Saviour's time; and he doth not any where find fault with any of them as not canonical, which we have no reason to doubt but he would have done, if any one of them had been otherwise. And that these are the same the *Jews* then received, appears sufficiently, because both *Jews* and *Christians* to this day agree in them. And as for the books of the new testament, we are sufficiently assured, that these and no other are the books which the ancient church received for canonical and of divine authority, and though some of them were for a time controverted, yet upon farther enquiry and examination they were received.

V. Whether this faith concerning a divine revelation made to others, do admit of degrees? That it doth, is evident from these expressions which the scripture useth, of *increasing faith*, of *growing in it*, of a *weak* and *strong faith*, all which plainly supposeth degrees. And that these degrees of faith which the scripture speaks of, are to be understood of a higher and lower degree of assurance concerning a divine revelation as such, and concerning the things revealed, I shewed before. For all the doubts which the disciples had concerning what our Saviour taught, did resolve itself into this, whether he was the *Messias*, and sent by God to teach those things; which had they been fully satisfied of, they could have made no doubt of any thing that he taught.

And here it will be proper to enquire, what is the highest degree of assurance which we can have concerning a divine revelation made to another, that it is such; whether it be an infallible assurance, or only an undoubted certainty. The difference between them is this; an infallible assurance is such as excludes all possibility of error and mistake; an undoubted certainty doth not exclude all possibility of mistake, but only all just and reasonable cause why a prudent and considerate man should doubt. And the reason why I make this enquiry, is in order to be satisfied of a clear and firm way for the resolution of our faith against the papists, who say it is impossible for us to give any satisfactory account of our faith, because we do finally resolve it into fallible grounds, and consequently our faith must be fallible, and consequently cannot be divine, because all divine faith is infallible; for, say they, when we enquire why you believe the doctrines of christian religion; you say, upon divine authority, or the revelation of God in scripture. This is granted

granted to be an infallible ground, if we can be infallibly assured that the scriptures are a divine revelation; therefore they enquire in the second place; why do you believe the scriptures to be a divine revelation? We say, because the persons who delivered the doctrines contained in them, had the greatest attestation from God, that they were employed by him, to reveal and make known his mind; and this attestation was miracles. But then they ask, what assurance have you that such miracles were wrought? Have you an infallible assurance, or not? If not, then it cannot be a sufficient ground for a divine faith, which is always infallible. In opposition therefore to them, I shall not now attempt to shew the insufficiency of their way of resolving faith; but vindicate ours as sufficient, by laying down and proving, if I can, these propositions.

1. That infallibility is not essential to divine faith, and necessarily included in the notion of it; which I prove thus. Divine faith admits of degrees, as I have shewed before: but there can be no degree of infallibility. Infallibility is an impossibility of being deceived; but there are no degrees of impossibility, one thing is not more impossible than another: but all things that are impossible, are equally so.

2. That the assurance which we have of the miracles wrought for the confirmation of the gospel, is not an infallible assurance. I shewed before that there are *three* ways whereby we may be assured of matter of fact, such as the working of miracles is.

First, By our own senses.

Secondly, by the report of credible witnesses.

Thirdly, By credible history. But none of these ways give us infallible assurance. That it is possible our senses may deceive us, I think no body will deny; and if so, then the testimony of witnesses, and the report of history; which likewise depends originally upon our senses, may deceive us. I do not know a *fourth* way whereby we may be assured of matter of fact.

3. That an undoubted assurance of a divine revelation, that it is such, is as much as in reason can be expected. I deny not but that a divine revelation is an infallible ground of faith; because whatever God says is infallibly true, and a faith built upon a divine revelation would be infallible, if we could be infallibly assured that it is a divine revelation; but that we cannot be without another divine revelation to assure us infallibly that this is one, and that other would require a third, and so without end; which being absurd and unreasonable, it remains that an infallible assurance of a divine revelation is impossible; and consequently, that we can have no more than an undoubted assurance; and this is as much as in reason we can expect to have; for it is unreasonable to expect that we should have any greater assurance that such a revelation is from God, than we have that there is a God, because that there is a God, is the first and most fundamental principle in religion, and it is unreasonable to expect greater assurance of any thing in religion, than we have of that which is the first principle of it. And indeed it is impossible; for no man can be infallibly assured, that a revelation is from God, unless he be first infallibly assured that there is a God, but no man hath more than undoubted assurance that there is a God. No man pretends to a divine revelation that there is a God; but only to have rational satisfaction of it, such as leaves no just or reasonable cause to doubt of it. And why then should any desire greater assurance of a divine revelation, than he hath of a God?

4. An undoubted assurance is sufficient to constitute a *divine faith*. Mark xvi. 14. it is said, *Christ upbraided his disciples with their unbelief; because they believed not them, who had seen him after he was risen*. Suppose now the disciples had believed, which they ought to have done, this faith of theirs would have been a truly divine faith; but by no means infallible. For that cannot be an infallible faith which is built but upon fallible grounds: now the ground upon which they ought to have believed, was the report of credible witnesses; but the report of credible witnesses is by no means infallible: it is indeed undoubted, for I have no reason to doubt of a credible report; for that is credible which I have just cause to believe; but I can have no just cause to doubt of that which I have just cause to believe.

As an undoubted assurance is sufficient to constitute a divine faith, so it is sufficient to all the ends and purposes of a divine faith. To instance in the faith of the promises of eternal life. What is the end and design of this faith, but to encourage our obedience, and make us continue in it, notwithstanding the hazard of any thing in this world? Now I say, an undoubted assurance is abundantly sufficient to this end. Do not men venture their estates in traffick to places they never saw, because they have it from credible persons, that there are such places; and they have no reason to doubt their testimony: and why should not the same assurance serve in greater matters; if an undoubted assurance of a lesser benefit and advantage will make men venture as much? Why should any man desire greater assurance of any thing than to have no just reason to doubt of it; why more than so much as the thing is capable of? I cannot possibly understand why every man should not be contented with sufficient assurance, or for what reason a man should desire more than enough; and why a man should not be satisfied that a thing is so, when he hath as great assurance of it, and as good evidence for it as he could have, supposing it were.

And for men to say, nothing less than infallible assurance can satisfy a man's mind, that men will always doubt so long as there is a possibility of the contrary; and there will be a possibility of the contrary, until we have infallible assurance, is as unreasonable as can be imagined. I ask any man whether he be infallibly assured that there was such a man as *William the Conqueror*? or that there is such a country as *Spain*? If he say he is, I ask where is his infallible evidence for this? He will cite several historians: but all this is human testimony, and that is fallible. It seems then he is not infallibly certain there was such a man, or there is such a country; and consequently there is a possibility of the contrary. 'Tis granted there is: but is any sober man unsatisfied in his mind about these things? I would fain meet with the man that will tell me in good earnest, that he hath reason to doubt, whether there was such a man, or not; and whether there be such a place as *Spain* or not? So that it is fond for any man to alledge a bare possibility of the contrary, as a reasonable cause of doubting concerning any thing, for which we have as good evidence as the thing is capable of.

Upon these grounds we can easily resolve our faith. We believe the doctrine of christian religion, because it is revealed by God; we believe it to be revealed by God, because it was confirmed by unquestionable miracles: we believe such miracles were wrought, because we have as great assurance of this, as any matter of fact, at such a distance from the time it was done, is capable of. Now if the *Papists* say, this doth at last amount to no more than moral assurance; I grant it doth not: but then I have proved this assurance to be as much as in reason can be expected, and as much as is sufficient to the nature and ends of a divine faith, and that an infallible assurance is not agreeable to a human understanding; but an incommunicable attribute and prerogative of the divine nature, which whoever pretends to, he hath not the modesty of a creature, but doth by a sacrilegious ambition attempt the throne of God, and equal himself to the most high. And therefore it is no wonder that the *Popes of Rome*, after they had once assumed to themselves to be infallible, did presently arrogate to themselves the titles of God, there being such strict connexion between the attribute of infallibility, and the divine nature, that whoever challengeth the first, may with equal reason claim the other.

I shall only add this, that nothing hath been more pernicious to christian religion, than the vain pretences of men to greater assurance concerning things relating to it, than they can make good; the mischief of which is this; that when discerning and inquisitive men find that men pretend to greater matters, than they can prove, this makes them doubt of all they say, and to call in question the truth of christianity itself. Whereas if men would be contented to speak justly of things, and pretend to no greater assurance than they can bring evidence for; considerate men would be apt to believe them. Every knowing man being more ready to listen to a modest man, whose confidence bears a proportion to the reason and arguments he brings for what he says, than to a confident pretender, who calls every weak saying a demonstration. And indeed such men are but justly dealt withal, since the experience of the world hath sufficiently taught us, that usually those who speak modestly of things, are furnished with the best arguments for their assertions; and that

that those who have made the strongest pretences to infallibility in any thing, have the weakest reasons for what they have said; of which this account may be given, that good reasons and arguments are requisite to beget in men a rational assurance; but a strong conceit is sufficient to beget in men an opinion of infallibility.

VI. What is the proper and genuine effect of this *faith* of a *divine revelation*?
I answer: A compliance with the design and intention of it.

VII. In what respect this may be called a *divine faith*? To this *I answer*: Not only in respect of the object of it, and the argument whereby it is wrought, and the effect of it: but likewise in respect of the author and efficient of it, which is the divine Spirit. And here, if time would permit, I should speak of the testimony of the Spirit; not as an argument whereby a persuasion of a *divine revelation*, viz. That the scriptures are the word of God, is wrought; but also as he is the author and efficient cause of it. I do most readily grant the great influence that the Spirit of God hath upon the minds of men in this work of faith, as well as in every spiritual act: but it is to be enquired, how the Spirit of God may be said to work this faith in us; whether by strengthening the faculty; or by holding the mind intent upon the argument, whereby this persuasion is wrought; or discovering the object; or removing the impediments; or furthering and helping forward the efficacy of it upon our hearts and lives. But of this, God willing, in my next discourse.

S E R M O N CLXIX.

Of the Testimony of the Spirit, to the Truth of the Gospel.

H E B. xi. 6.

But without Faith it is impossible to please God.

*The fifth
 Sermon on
 this Text.*

IN discoursing of the faith or persuasion of a *divine revelation*, I came to enquire, in what respects this may be called a divine faith. To which my *answer* was, that it is a divine faith, not only with respect to the object of it, and the argument whereby it is wrought, and the effect of it: but likewise in respect of the author and efficient of it, which is the divine Spirit. I proceed therefore to consider the testimony of the divine Spirit, not only as an argument whereby a persuasion of a divine revelation, viz. That the scriptures are the word of God, is wrought: but also as he is the author and efficient cause of it. The scripture doth in a peculiar manner ascribe the belief of a divine revelation, especially of the revelation of the gospel, to the Spirit of God. In this sense the scripture faith, *that no man can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Spirit of God*. And though every good persuasion that we have, be in some sort or other to be ascribed to God, yet I observe it to be the phrase of the new testament, to attribute the belief of the gospel, in a more peculiar manner, to the Spirit of God. When any man believes the principles of natural religion, that there is a God, that the soul is immortal, and that there are rewards after this life, as the heathens did; even this is from God, who hath planted these principles in our natures; or, which comes to all one, hath given us such faculties, by the use and improvement of which, we may come to the knowledge of these principles: but it is not usual

usual in the phrase of scripture, to attribute this natural knowledge in such a peculiar manner to the Spirit of God.

When any man believes the matters of divine revelation, for instance, the doctrines contained in the gospel; this faith is to be attributed to the Spirit of God; but not as immediately persuading us of the truth of these doctrines, but by persuading us, that the gospel which contains these truths, is a divine revelation; or, which is all one, that the Lord Jesus Christ, who delivered these doctrines to the world, was a divine person, and came from God: and if we once firmly believe and entertain this, that *Jesus was the Messiah*, and sent from God to acquaint the world with his mind and will, we can make no doubt of the truth of any thing which he hath delivered. So that the faith which the scripture doth in a peculiar manner attribute to the Spirit of God, is this persuasion, *that Jesus is the Christ*; that is, that he was the true *Messiah*, and sent from God.

So that the question is: how the Spirit of God doth concur to the begetting of this faith or persuasion? Or, why this faith is in such a peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of God?

I answer, upon these *two* accounts.

First, in respect of the outward evidence which the Spirit of God gives us to persuade us to believe.

Secondly, In respect of the inward efficacy and operation of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men in believing.

First, In respect of the outward evidence which the Spirit of God gives us to persuade us to believe. And if this be not that which divines mean by the testimony of the Spirit in this matter, yet I think it is that which may most properly be so called. Now the Spirit of God did outwardly testify concerning *Jesus*, that he was the *Messiah*, and came from God; and that the doctrine which he taught was divine.

1. In the voice from heaven, which accompanied the descending of the Spirit upon him, in the form of a dove, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, Matth. iii 17.

2. In those miracles which Christ himself wrought by the Spirit of God; which were so eminent a testimony of the Spirit of God, that the resisting of the evidence of those miracles, and the attributing of them to the devil, is by our Saviour called a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and such a sin as shall never be pardoned: because miracles being the highest attestation that can be given to the divinity of any person or his doctrine; whoever resists this evidence, resists his last remedy; and such a person must needs remain in his infidelity, because there is nothing more that can be done for his conviction.

3. The third eminent testimony which the holy Spirit gave to Christ, was in the great miracle of his *resurrection from the dead*; and hence it is that the great miracle of Christ's *resurrection*, which was the highest attestation to the divinity of his person, and the grand confirmation to his doctrine, is frequently in scripture, in a most peculiar manner ascribed to the Spirit of God. Rom. i. 4. *And was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness*, that is, by those miracles which he wrought by the Holy Ghost, and by his *resurrection from the dead*. And so Rom. viii. 11. *The Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead*. 1 Pet. iii. 18. *Being put to death in the flesh: but quickened by the Spirit*.

4. In the effusion of the Spirit upon the apostles, who were to preach Christ and his doctrine to the world: and that it might carry its evidence along with it, God poured forth his Spirit upon those who were to be the publishers of it; by which Spirit they were endued with several miraculous powers and gifts, to convince the world of the truth of the doctrine which they preached. And with relation to this, I think, it is that the apostle saith, 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. *And my speech, and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom; but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*; that is, they did not use human eloquence to persuade men, but delivered the gospel with all plainness: and that which made those plain discourses so powerful, were those powerful demonstrations of the divine Spirit, which appeared in those miraculous gifts wherewith they were endowed. I am sure Origen understands this text so. And so likewise the apostle, 1 Thess. i. 5.

speaks to the same purpose, that *the gospel came not unto you in word only: but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*; that is, they did not only speak words to men, but the doctrine which they preached was attested in a powerful manner by the Holy Ghost, in those extraordinary gifts, which were bestowed upon them, which was a great evidence to their hearers, and gave them great assurance of the truth of what they delivered. I think this is the meaning of those two places, but I will mention two others which are more unquestionable, *Acts v. 32.* where *Peter* and the rest of the apostles tell the high priests and their officers, what evidence they had for what they preached concerning the resurrection and ascension of Christ. *We are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey him.* Not only they themselves had seen what they preached: but to confirm their testimony, the Holy Ghost was poured forth upon them in miraculous gifts. And *Heb. ii. 3, 4.* *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?* So the Holy Ghost gave testimony to the truth of the doctrine which the apostles preached, by those gifts which he endowed them withal, and those miracles which he enabled them to work.

And I doubt not but with relation to the testimony which the Spirit of God gave to Christ by the miracles he wrought by Christ and his apostles, I say, I doubt not, but that with relation to his testimony it is, that the apostle saith, he was *justified in the Spirit*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. *Great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit.* That is, the miraculous power of the Spirit which appeared in him, and did accompany his doctrine, did justify him to the world, and vindicate him from being an impostor and deceiver.

From all which it appears, that the testimony which the holy Spirit gives to Christ and his doctrine, was the miracles which he and his apostles wrought by the Spirit of God: and if we will take our forms of speaking from scripture, this is that which may most properly be called the testimony of the Spirit to the truth of the gospel. But I deny not but besides this outward evidence, which the Spirit of God gives to the truth of the gospel, with respect to which the faith of the gospel is in a peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of God, there is likewise an inward efficacy and operation of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men. Therefore,

Secondly, Faith is in a peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of God, in respect of the inward efficacy and operation of the divine Spirit upon the hearts and minds of those who sincerely and effectually believe and entertain the gospel; I say, who sincerely and effectually believe and entertain the gospel; that is, who so believe and entertain the gospel as to obey it, and comply with it in their hearts and lives. For I doubt not but that there is so much evidence for the truth and divine authority of the gospel, as is in itself sufficient, without any peculiar operation of the Spirit of God, to silence all opposers, and to convince them so far as that they cannot have any sufficient reason to disbelieve it: but withal, I do not think that this faith doth become an abiding and effectual persuasion in any person, without the special operation of the Holy Ghost. Now that the Spirit of God can work this effectual persuasion in the mind of man, cannot be doubted by any man who considers the vast power and influence which the Spirit of God, who made our souls and knows the frame of them, can have upon the mind of man: all the difficulty is about the manner of it; how this faith is wrought in us by the Spirit of God. Now although it were sufficient for us to know the thing, though we were ignorant of the manner how it is done, and we might very well rest satisfied in this; that the Spirit of God works this faith in us, though we did not know how he does it; yet because many have taken upon them to state and determine the particular manner how it is done, it will be requisite, in order to the rectifying some mistakes about it, to enquire more particularly into this matter.

Now all the ways that have been assigned, or which, I think, we can easily imagine, may be reduced to one of these *six* heads. When we say the Spirit of God works faith in us, we must conceive it to be done some or all of these ways.

1. By strengthening the faculty, that is, raising and enabling our understanding to yield assent to the gospel. Or,
2. By enlightening and discovering the object, that is, the conclusion to be believed.
3. By propounding to us the arguments, or evidence, whereby we may be persuaded of it. Or,
4. By holding our minds intent upon this evidence, 'till it have wrought its effect upon us. Or,
5. By removing the impediments which hinder our assent. Or,
6. By furthering and helping forward the efficacy of this persuasion upon our hearts and lives.

That the Spirit can work faith in us, any, or all of these ways, so far as they are consistent with one another, I make not the least doubt. For what man who believes the infinite power of the divine Spirit, can make the least question, whether it can raise and heighten our faculties above their natural and ordinary pitch? or whether it can discover an object to us, with the greatest clearness and satisfaction? or whether it can offer to our minds the best arguments, and the highest evidence that a thing is capable of? or whether it can hold our minds intent upon the consideration of any thing? or whether it can remove all hindrances and impediments? or whether it can make the persuasion of any truth effectual? No man in reason can doubt of the possibility of these. But the question is, What reason we have to assert this or that particular manner? and what necessity and convenience there is from experience, or evidence of scripture, so to do?

First of all, there seems no necessity of asserting the first; though I will not contend with any man that shall. For if this be true, that our understandings are naturally endowed with a sufficient power to assent to any truth that is sufficiently propounded to them; then there can be no necessity to assert, that the Spirit of God doth, in the work of faith, raise and elevate our understandings above their natural pitch. But I think it may easily be proved, that our understandings are naturally endowed with a sufficient power to assent to any truth that is sufficiently propounded to them; and that in such a case nothing hinders the assent of men, but their own perverseness and obstinacy, which usually proceeds from opposition of their lusts, or passions, or interest, to the truth which is propounded to them. For if mens understandings be not naturally endowed with a sufficient power to yield assent to the gospel, when it is sufficiently propounded to them, how can it be mens duty to believe it? or what justice can condemn them for unbelief? but though there be no necessity of asserting, that God doth always strengthen and elevate the understandings of those who believe; yet there is no reason to deny but that God may do this when he pleaseth, and possibly he often doth it.

God is said in scripture, *to enlighten the eyes of our understandings*, which we may if we please, understand in this sense; although that may be done by propounding such truths to us as we were ignorant of before, and could not have discovered, unless they had been revealed.

Secondly, The *second* way whereby the Spirit of God may be conceived to work faith in us, is by enlightening and discovering the object, or thing to be believed. In the case we are speaking of, the object or thing to be believed, is the gospel: now we may imagine the Spirit of God may work a faith or persuasion of this in us, by revealing or discovering to us this proposition, that the gospel is true. But this I need not speak much to, because I do not know any that pretend to have a particular and immediate revelation from God, that the gospel is true. So that though God may do this when he pleaseth, yet I do not know any who assert this to be the way whereby faith is wrought in men.

Thirdly, The Spirit of God may be conceived to work faith in us, by propounding and offering to us such arguments and evidence, as are apt to persuade us of the truth of the gospel. And this the Spirit of God, which inspired the writers of the scripture, doth mediately by the scriptures, and those characters of divinity, which are in the doctrines contained in them; and by those miracles, which are there credibly related to be wrought by the Spirit of God, for the confirmation of that doctrine. And besides this, the Spirit of God may, when he pleaseth, and probably

bably often doth, immediately suggest those arguments to our minds, and bring them to our remembrance.

Fourthly, The Spirit of God may be conceived to work faith in us, by holding our minds intent upon this evidence, 'till it hath wrought its effect upon us. And this I do not doubt, but the Spirit of God, out of his abundant grace and goodness to men, often doth; and I believe many men have found their minds kept intent upon such considerations, as have mightily prevailed upon them, and been effectual to persuade them to entertain and obey the gospel; and must acknowledge that their minds were awakened by such considerations, and made attentive to them, beyond their own inclinations to think upon such things; and in such a strange and unaccountable manner, as they cannot in reason but attribute to some superior influence, *viz.* to the holy Spirit of God.

Fifthly, By removing the impediments which hinder our effectual assent to the gospel. And in this and the last particular, I conceive the work of the Spirit of God in the producing of faith, principally to consist: I say in these principally, not absolutely excluding the former. The great impediment to the belief and entertainment of the gospel, is the prejudice which the minds of men are apt to conceive against it, either upon account of their education in a contrary religion, or upon account of their lusts, or some worldly interest to which the gospel is opposite. Now these are as so many bars upon the understandings of men, to keep out the truth from entering into them. The prejudice of a contrary education, is a monstrous obstacle to religion. When men have believed otherwise from their youth, and have had contrary principles implanted in them in their tender years, and have all their lives been possessed with contrary apprehensions of things; the clearest truths that can be offered to them, come upon infinite disadvantage; their understandings are tinctured, and put false colours upon every thing that is represented to them. And this was the case of the *Jews*, when the *Messias* came: they were possessed with prejudices against his mean appearance, and had fashioned to themselves another kind of *Messias*, that should be a glorious temporal prince; and had been brought up in this apprehension; and this made them so invincibly obstinate against the reception of him; though the whole nation, when he came, were in expectation of him. And this was also the case of the *Gentiles*, when the gospel was first preached to them; they had been educated in a contrary religion, and were possessed with quite other apprehensions, which made the passage of the gospel infinitely difficult. And I doubt not but that in the first publishing of the gospel, the Spirit did remarkably work upon the minds of men, for the removing of these prejudices, and thereby making way for the entertainment of the gospel. And though this prejudice be not now upon us in these parts of the world, who are brought up in the christian religion; yet the lusts and interests of men are now great obstacles to the effectual entertainment of the gospel; and the Spirit of God doth many times eminently appear in the restraining and conquering the lusts of men, and removing those other prejudices which hinder them from embracing the truth.

Sixthly, The last way whereby the Spirit of God may be said to work in us an effectual belief of the gospel, is by furthering and helping forward the efficacy of this persuasion upon our hearts and lives, in the first work of conversion and regeneration, and in the progressive work of sanctification afterward, both which the scripture doth every where attribute to the Spirit of God, as the author and efficient cause. The faith which *purifies the heart*, and *conquers the world*, and *works by love*, hath this effect from the Spirit of God. Hence we are said to be *sanctified by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, and *the belief of the truth*, and *to be kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation*.

Thus I have shewn you as briefly and clearly as I could, how the Spirit of God doth concur to the begetting of this divine faith and persuasion in us, and consequently in what respects *faith* may be said to be the gift of God. I shall only draw *two or three* inferences from this discourse.

I. We may learn from hence to attribute all the good that is in us, or that we do in any kind, to God. Every good thing is from God; so St. James tells us, that *every good and perfect work comes down even from the father of lights*. Much more

more are we to ascribe to the free grace of God all the revelation of supernatural truth, which we cannot possibly come to the knowledge of, unless God of his free grace and goodness be pleased to discover it to us. And so likewise are we to ascribe to God, and the operation of his holy Spirit upon our hearts, our belief of those truths, and assent to them. Considering the corruption and degeneracy of human nature, and the opposition of the lusts and prejudices of men to divine truth, we stand in need of the grace of God, and the operation of his Spirit upon our hearts, to bring us to a firm assent to the gospel; for as *flesh and blood could not reveal these truths to us*, so neither is it very apt to assent to them when they are revealed.

In the phrase of scripture, all good is attributed to God; and all spiritual good to the holy Spirit of God working in us, and assisting us to the doing of it. As on the other hand, the scripture attributes all those sins that are committed in the world to the influence of evil spirits. *He that committeth sin is of the Devil.* And though we do not know many times, how the Spirit of God worketh a good inclination in us, yet it is safe to follow the phrase of scripture, and to ascribe all good to God, as in some way or other the author of it.

II. This doth not excuse the infidelity of men, that *faith is the gift of God.* For though no man doth believe without some influence of the divine spirit upon his heart, yet this does by no means excuse those who believe not, any more than it is an excuse to the infidelity of men, that the scripture attributes it to the Devil, as in some sort the cause of it. He is said to *blind the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.* But the unbelief of men is a fault for all this; because the devil cannot blind our minds, unless we consent to it: he can only suggest false principles to us; but we may chuse whether we will entertain them or not: he can only tempt us to reject the truth; but we may chuse whether we will do so or not. In this we are faulty, because we may resist the devil, and quench or repel those fiery darts which he casts into our minds; but if we will consent to his temptations, and suffer ourselves to be blinded by him, the fault of our unbelief is our own, as well as his; and we are guilty of the infidelity which we suffer him to tempt us to.

So on the other hand, though *faith be the gift of God*; yet those that believe not are faulty upon this account, that they quench and resist the blessed motions of God's Spirit, and the influence and operation of the Spirit of God, which accompany the truth of the gospel to the minds of men, and produce their effect wherever they are not opposed and rejected by the prejudice and perverseness of men.

III. Let us depend upon God for every good gift; and earnestly beg the assistance and influence of his holy Spirit, which is so necessary to us to beget faith in us, and to preserve and make it effectual upon our hearts and lives. Bread is not more necessary to the support of our natural life, than the holy spirit of God to our spiritual life.

For our encouragement to ask this gift of God's holy Spirit, our Saviour hath told us, that God is very ready to bestow him upon us. No father upon earth is more ready to give bread to his children that cry after him, than God is to give his Spirit to those that heartily and earnestly beg it of him. So our Saviour assures us, Luke xi. 11, 12, 13. *If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

And now I have done with the *first* thing that I propounded, which was to open the nature of faith to you in general. I have been the longer upon this, because I thought it very material and important to the settling of right apprehensions in us concerning religion and divine things; and I have all along endeavoured to make things as easy and plain as the nature of the subject would permit. And though probably many things that I have said, might not be within the full reach and comprehension of all capacities, yet because I hoped they might be useful and beneficial to some at least, I could not think the other consideration a sufficient reason why I should wholly omit them, and pass them by; remembering what St. Paul says, that *he was a debtor to the wise*, as well as the *unwise*. And St. Peter tells

tells us, that St. Paul in his epistles wrote *many things which were hard to be understood* by some persons; yet because those things might be of use to others, the Spirit of God did not think fit to omit the writing of them. What remains I shall reserve to another discourse, with which I shall conclude this subject.

S E R M O N CLXX.

The Efficacy, Usefulness, and Reasonableness of *Divine Faith.*

H E B. xi. 6.

But without Faith it is impossible to please God.

The sixth Sermon on this Text. IN discoursing on these words, I have dispatched the *first* thing which I proposed, *viz.* to give an account of the notion and nature of faith in general; under which I have largely treated of a religious or divine faith in particular.

The *Second* thing which I proposed, and to which I now proceed, is to confirm the truth of the proposition which I laid down from the words, *viz.* that faith is the great principle of religion. I told you that these words, *Without faith it is impossible to please God*, do not only imply that faith is a necessary condition, without which men cannot be religious: but likewise that it is a cause and principle of religion. Without faith a man cannot be religious: and where there is true faith, it will have this effect upon men to make them religious. Therefore I shall distinctly speak to these *two* things.

First, That without faith there can be no religion.

Secondly, That where there is a true faith, it will have this influence upon men to make them religious.

First, That without faith there can be no religion. And this will appear by enquiring into the nature of all human actions, whether civil or religious: and this is common to both of them, that they suppose some kind of faith or persuasion. All human actions have an order and reference to some end, and consequently suppose some knowledge of the end, and of the means whereby it may be attained. So that unless a man do believe and be persuaded that such a thing is some way or other good for him, and consequently desirable and fit to be propounded as an end, and that this end is attainable, and the means which he useth are probable and likely for the attaining of this end, he will sit still and do nothing at all about it. So that without faith it is impossible to do any thing: he that believes nothing will do nothing.

To instance first in civil actions, and the common affairs and concernments of life; all these are done by virtue of some faith or persuasion concerning them. For example, husbandry, or merchandise; no man will apply himself to these, but upon some belief or persuasion of the possibility and necessity, or at least usefulness and convenience of these to the ends of life. No man would plow or sow if he did not believe that there were such a thing as the growing of corn, and that it is necessary for the support of our lives, and if he were not persuaded of the probability of reaping some fruit and benefit of his pains and industry. No man would traffick to *Turkey* or the *Indies*, if he did not believe there were such places, and that they afforded such commodities, and that he might have them upon such terms as might recompense the adventure of his charge and pains. And so in all other actions of life.

So

So it is in divine and religious things; nothing is done without faith. No man will worship God, unless he believe there is a God; unless he be persuaded *there is such a Being*, which by reason of his excellency and perfection, may challenge our veneration; and unless he believe the goodness of this God, that *he will reward those that diligently serve him*. For all acts of religion being reasonable, they suppose at least an object and an end; that there is a God to be worshipped, and that it is not in vain to serve him. This faith is necessary to natural religion. And in case God do discover and reveal his will to men, no man can obey the will of God, unless he be persuaded that God hath some way or other made known his will; and be persuaded likewise as to the particular instance wherein his obedience is required, that this is God's will. For instance, no man will obey the precepts of the bible as divine laws and commands, unless he be persuaded that the doctrine contained in the holy scriptures is a divine revelation. So likewise no man can entertain Christ as the *Messias* and Saviour of the world, and yield obedience to his laws, unless he believes that he was *sent of God*, and *ordained by him to be a Prince and a Saviour*. So that you see the necessity of faith to religion.

Secondly, I shall shew the influence that a divine faith hath upon men to make them religious. A true divine faith supposeth a man satisfied and persuaded of the reasonableness, and necessity of being religious; that it is reasonable for every man to be so, and that it is necessary to his interest. Now there needs no more to be done to put a man upon any thing, but to satisfy him of these two things; that the action you persuade him to is reasonable; that is, possible and fit to be done; and that it is highly his interest to do it: that is, if he do it, it will be eminently for his advantage; if he do not do it, it will be eminently to his prejudice, and he is a lost and undone man. If you can once possess a man, that is in any degree sober and considerate, with these persuasions, you may make him do any thing of which he is thus persuaded. Now a true divine faith supposeth a man satisfied and persuaded of all this.

1. Of the reasonableness of religion. He that verily believes there is a God, believes there is a Being that hath all excellency and perfection, that is infinitely good, and wise, and just, and powerful, that made and preserves all things. Now he that believes such a Being as this, cannot but think it reasonable that he should be esteemed, and honoured, and adored by all those creatures that are sensible and apprehensive of these excellencies; that seeing he is infinitely good, and the fountain of all being, and all the blessings we enjoy, we should love so great a benefactor, and thankfully acknowledge his goodness to us; not only by constant praise of him, but by an universal obedience to his will, and a chearful submission to his pleasure. For what more reasonable than gratitude? that seeing he is infinitely wise and powerful, as well as good, we should trust in him, and depend upon him in all conditions, and seek to him for what we want. For what more reasonable than to place our confidence in him, who is able and willing to do us good; and to sue to him who knows our wants, and is ready to supply them? And seeing he is truth itself, and hath been pleased to reveal his will to us; what can be more reasonable than to believe all those discoveries and revelations which *God, who cannot lie*, hath made to us, and to comply with the intention of them? And seeing he is the original pattern of all excellency and perfection; what can be more reasonable than to imitate the perfections of the divine nature, and to endeavour to be as like God, as we can? And these are the sum of all religion. So that whoever firmly believes a God, and that he hath revealed and made known his will to the world, cannot but be fully satisfied and persuaded of the reasonableness and equity of religion, and all those duties which religion requires of us; and consequently of the possibility of performing all those duties which religion requires of us, by the assistance of the grace and strength which God is ready to afford us, if we beg it of him. For no man that believes the goodness of God, (which every man does, that believes a God) can think that he will make it our duty to do any thing which he hath left us in an utter impossibility of doing.

2. A true divine faith supposeth a man satisfied and persuaded of the necessity of religion; that is, that it is necessary to every man's interest to be religious; that it will be highly for our advantage to be so, and eminently to our prejudice to

be otherwise ; that if we be so we shall be happy, if we be not, we shall be miserable and undone for ever. And every man that believes a God, and the revelations which he hath made, cannot but be fully satisfied of this.

And this will appear upon these *two* accounts.

1. From the nature and reason of the thing. And,
2. From the promises and threatenings of God's word.

1. From the nature and reason of the thing. Every man that believes a God, must believe him to be the supream good ; and the greatest happiness to consist in the enjoyment of him ; and a separation from him to be the greatest misery. Now God is not to be enjoyed, but in a way of religion. Holiness makes us like to God, and likeness will make us love him ; and love will make us happy in the enjoyment of him ; and without this it is impossible to be happy. There can be no happiness without pleasure and delight ; and we cannot take pleasure in any thing we do not love ; and there can be no love, without a likeness and suitability of disposition. So long as God is good, and we evil ; so long as he is pure and we unholy ; so long as he hates sin, and we love it ; there can be no happy intercourse, no agreeable communion, and delightful society between God and us. So that if we be holy, happiness will result from this temper : and if we be wicked, we are necessarily and unavoidably miserable. Sin separates between God and us, and hinders our happiness ; and it is impossible that a wicked man should be near God, or enjoy him. God and a sinner are two such unequal matches, that it is impossible to bring them together ; *for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? or what communion hath light with darkness ?*

2. Every man which believes the revelations which God hath made, cannot but be satisfied, how much religion is his interest from the promises and threatenings of God's word. God in his word hath in plain and express terms promised everlasting glory and happiness to them that obey him ; and hath threatened wicked men with dreadful and eternal punishments ; *to them that by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, he hath promised eternal life : but to them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, he hath threatened indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.* Now if we believe the gospel, which assures us of another life after this, and a future judgment which will determine all men to a state of everlasting happiness or misery, we cannot but know it to be our interest, by all possible means to endeavour to attain the happiness which God hath promised, and to avoid the misery which he hath threatened. All men naturally desire happiness, and dread misery and destruction ; and these desires and fears are intimate to our natures, and can never be separated from them ; because they flow immediately from those principles of self-love, and self-preservation, which are deeply rooted in every man's heart, and are woven into the very make and frame of his nature, and will last as long as our beings. And so long as these principles remain in us, there is no man that is firmly persuaded of the promises and threatenings of the gospel, but must believe it to be his highest interest to be religious. Fear and hope are the two passions which govern us ; hope is as it were the spur that quickens us to our duty, and fear is the curb that restrains us from sin ; and the greater the good hoped for, or the evil that is feared, the greater power and influence these passions have upon us. Now there cannot be a greater good, than compleat and everlasting happiness ; nor a greater evil, than extreme and eternal misery. So that whoever believes the promises and threatenings of the gospel, hath his hope raised to the expectation of the greatest good and happiness in case of obedience ; and his fears extended to the expectation of the greatest evil and misery in case of final impenitence and disobedience. And a true divine faith doth contain in it both this hope and fear : for a faith in the promises of the gospel is nothing else, but the hopes of eternal life ; and a belief of the threatenings of the gospel is nothing else, but the fear of hell and eternal misery. So that a firm belief of the promises and threatenings of the gospel, must needs have as great influence upon men to make them religious, as the highest hopes and greatest fears can have ; and those men, that are not moved by the hopes of the greatest good, nor by the fears of the greatest danger, are not to be wrought upon in human ways, nothing will prevail with them.

Thus

Thus I have shewn you what influence a divine Faith hath upon religion ; for as much as whoever believes there is a God, and that the scriptures are the word of God, is fully satisfied and convinced how reasonable it is, and how much it is his interest to be religious. I come in the last place to the application of this discourse.

First, This shews why there is so little of true religion in the world ; 'tis for want of faith, without which it is impossible for men to be religious. Men are not firmly persuaded that there is a God ; that there is a being above them that is omniscient, and knows every thing that they do, and takes notice of every word, and thought, and action ; that is so good, and so powerful, as to make those happy that love and obey him ; and so just and powerful, as to make those miserable who hate him, and rebel against him. Men are not persuaded that their souls are immortal ; and that there is another life after this, in which men shall be happy or miserable to all eternity, according as they demean themselves in this world. Men are not firmly persuaded that the scriptures are the word of God, and that the precepts and prohibitions of the bible are the laws of a great king, who will amply reward the observance of his laws, and severely vindicate the breach and violation of them. Men do not believe that the promises and threatnings of God's word are true, and that every jot and tittle of them shall be accomplish'd. For did men believe these things, they would be religious ; they would not dare to live in any known sin or impiety of life : unless we can presume that a man can be seriously unwilling to be happy, and have a longing desire to be miserable, and undone for ever. For whoever believes the principles of religion, and the precepts, and promises, and threatnings that are contain'd in this holy book, and yet after all this can continue in sin, he must not only put off the principles of a reasonable creature, but must quit the very inclinations of his nature ; that is, he must knowingly refuse that which he naturally desires, which is happiness ; and must embrace that, which of all things that can be imagined he most abhors, and that is misery.

So that if men were verily persuaded, that the great, and holy, and just God looks continually upon them, and that 'tis impossible to hide from him any thing that we do, they would not dare to commit any sin in his sight, and under the eye of him who is their father and master, their sovereign and their judge, their friend and benefactor, who is invested with all these titles, and stands to us in all these relations, which may challenge reverence and respect. Did men believe the holiness and justice of God, that he hates sin, and will not let it go unpunish'd, would they venture to make him a witness of their wickedness, who they believe will be the avenger of it ? Did men believe that they shall live for ever, and that after this short life is ended, they must enter upon eternity ; that when they leave the world, there are but two ways which all men must go, either into life everlasting, or into eternal and intolerable torments ; did men believe this, would they not with all possible care and diligence endeavour to attain the one, and avoid the other ? Were men possess'd with a belief of eternity, how would they despise temporal and transitory things ? How would they neglect the concernments of this life, and overlook the little impertinencies of time, and refer all their thoughts and cares and endeavours to eternity ? This great and important interest would so fill their minds, and take up their thoughts, and employ their utmost cares and endeavours, and diligence, that they would scarce regard or speak, or think of any else ; they would be restless and impatient, 'till they had secured this grand affair and concernment ; they would subordinate all the interests of this world to that of the other, and make all the concernments of time to stoop to the grand concernment of eternity. Thus men would do, were they but firmly persuaded that there is another life after this, to which this bears no proportion.

Did men believe the scriptures to be the word of God, and to contain matters of the highest importance to our everlasting happiness ; would they neglect it and lay it aside, and study it no more than a man would do an almanack out of date, or than a man, who believes the attaining a philosopher's stone to be impossible, would study those books that treat of it ? If men did believe that it contains plain and easy directions for the attaining of eternal happiness, and escaping eternal misery ; they would converse much with it, make it their companion and their counsellor, *meditate in*

it day and night, read it with all diligence, and put in practice the Directions of it.

So that whatever men pretend, it is plain, that those who neglect God and religion, and contradict the precepts of his word by their lives, they do not firmly believe there is a God, nor that this book is the word of God. If this faith and persuasion were firmly rooted in men, they could not live wickedly. For a man that desires happiness, can no more neglect those means which he is convinced are necessary for the obtaining of it, than a man that desires life can neglect the means which he knows to be necessary for the preservation of it.

Secondly, If faith have so great an influence upon religion, then the next use shall be to persuade men to believe. No man can be religious that doth not believe these two things.

First, The principles of natural religion; that there is a God; that his soul is immortal; and that there are future rewards.

Secondly, That the scriptures are the word of God? or, which comes all to one, that the doctrine contained in them is a divine revelation. Therefore whoever would persuade men to be religious, he must begin here; and whoever would improve men in religion and holiness, he must labour to strengthen this principle of faith. Faith is the root of all other graces: and they will flourish, or decay, according to the degrees of our faith. Now he that would persuade a man, or prevail with him to do any thing, must do it one of these *three* ways; either by entreaty, or authority, or argument; either he must entreat him as a friend, or command him as subject to him and under his power, or convince him as a man. Now he that should go about to entreat men to believe any thing, or to charge them so to do, before he hath convinced them by sufficient arguments, that it is reasonable to do so, would, in my opinion, take a preposterous course. He that entreats or chargeth a man to do any thing, supposeth that he can do the thing if he will: but a man cannot believe what he will; the nature of a human understanding is such, that it cannot assent without evidence, nor believe any thing to be true, unless it see reason so to do, any more than a man can see a thing without light. So that if the dearest friend that I have in the world should beg of me with the greatest importunity; or any man that hath the greatest authority over me, should lay his severest commands upon me to believe a thing, for which I see no reason, I could not do it; because nothing can command assent, but evidence. So that he that would persuade men to believe either the principles of natural religion, or any divine revelation, must convince them of the truth of them, for it is unreasonable to desire a man to believe any thing, unless I give him good reason why he should.

And this being the proper course which is to be taken, there are two sorts of persons to whom I shall apply my self in this exhortation: those who do not believe these things; and those who are persuaded of them: to the former, in order to the begetting of faith in them; to the latter, in order to the strengthening and confirming of their faith.

Those who do not believe, are of two sorts; either such as do positively disbelieve these things, and make it their business to arm themselves against them with all the arguments they can; who are so far from believing a God, or any divine revelation, that they endeavour to persuade themselves of the contrary, that there is no such thing; or else they are such as are indifferent about these matters. They have received the principles of religion by their education, and they have nothing to say against them, nor for them; they never consider'd them, nor the proper consequences of them; they neither believe nor disbelieve them upon any reasonable account.

Now these are to be dealt withal in the same way: for whatever will convince the disbeliever, will much more persuade the indifferent, and confirm the weak. For faith is to be strengthened by the same arguments by which it is wrought. Therefore I shall apply myself to convince unbelievers; and every one may apply those arguments which I use to this purpose, for the strengthening of their own faith.

But before I come to those arguments I intend to offer for the conviction of those that do not believe, I think it convenient to endeavour, if possible, to re-
move

move a violent, and I think unreasonable prejudice which men have received against all those who endeavour to make religion reasonable. As if *Bellarmino* had been in the right when he said, "That faith was rather to be defined by ignorance than by knowledge." The plain *English* of which is, that it is for want of understanding that men believe the gospel; and if the world were but a little more knowing and wise, no body would be a christian. I know not how it comes to pass, whether through the artifice of the popish party, who *bate the light, lest it should reprove them, and make them manifest*; or through the ignorance of too many well-meaning protestants; I say, I know not how it comes to pass, but so it is, that every one that offers to give a reasonable account of his faith, and to establish religion upon rational principles, is presently branded for a *Socinian*; of which we have a sad instance in that incomparable person Mr. *Chillingworth*, the glory of this age and nation, who for no other cause that I know of, but his worthy and successful attempts to make the christian religion reasonable, and to discover those firm and solid foundations upon which our faith is built, hath been requited with this black and odious character. But if this be *Socinianism*, for a man to enquire into the grounds and reasons of the christian religion, and to endeavour to give a satisfactory account why he believes it, I know no way but that all considerate inquisitive men, that are above fancy and enthusiasm, must be either *Soci-nians* or *Atheists*.

I cannot imagine how men can do greater disservice to religion, than by taking it off from the rational and solid basis upon which it stands, and bearing the world in hand, that men ought to believe without reason; for this is to turn faith into credulity, and to level christian religion with the vilest and most groundless enthusiasms that ever were in the world. Indeed if we had only to deal with *Henry Nicholas* and *Jacob Behmen*, who fight against us in the dark, not with reasons and arguments, but with insignificant words, and obscure phrases; we might make a shift to bear up against them with this principle, and we might charge them to believe us, as they do us to believe them, without giving them any reason for it: but if we were to deal with *Celsus*, or *Julian*, or *Porphry*, or some of our modern *Atheists*, we should soon find how vain it would be to go about to cajole them with phrases, and to gain them over to christianity, by telling them that they must deny their reason, and lay aside their understandings, and believe they know not why. If the great pillars of christianity, the antient Fathers, had taken this course in their apologies for christian religion, it had never triumph'd over *Judaism* and *Paganism* as it did; and whoever hath read over those defences and vindications of christian religion against *Jews* and *Heathens*, which were written in the first ages of the church, especially the books of *Origen* against *Celsus*, and *Eusebius* his book *de Demonst. and Præparat. Evangel.* shall find that they did very solicitously endeavour to satisfy the world by all rational ways both of the truth and reasonableness of christian religion. And if that was a good way then, it is so now; and never more necessary than in this age, which I fear hath as many atheists and infidels, that go under the name of christians, as ever were in any age since christian religion was first planted in the world.

But my design at present is not to persuade men particularly to the belief of christianity, (that I intend hereafter, by God's assistance, to speak to) but to persuade men to the belief of religion in general. So that all that I shall do at present shall be, as briefly as I can, to offer some arguments and considerations to persuade men to the belief of the principles of natural religion, and of the revelation which God hath made of his mind and will in the holy scriptures.

I. To persuade men to believe the principles of natural religion, such as the being of a God; the immortality of the soul; and future rewards after this life; I shall offer these *two* considerations.

First, That it is most reasonable so to do.

Secondly, That it is infinitely most prudent.

First, As to the being of God. Do but consider these *two* things which are undeniable: That there is a world, however it came; and that mankind do generally consent in a confident persuasion that there is a God, whatever be the cause of it. Now these *two* things being certain, and not liable to any question, let us enquire whether a reasonable account can be given of these without a God.

1. Supposing there be no God, how came this vast and orderly frame of the world? There are but two ways that can be imagined. Either it was from eternity always of itself; or it began some time to be. That it should be always of itself; though it may be imagined of the heavens, and the earth, which as to the main, are permanent, and continue the same; yet in things that succeed one after another, it is altogether unimaginable. As in the generation of men, there can be no doubt, whether every one of them was from another, or some of themselves. Some of them must be of themselves: for whatever number of causes be imagined in orderly succession, some of them must have no cause, but be of themselves. Now that which is of itself, and the cause of all others, is the first. So that there must be a first man; and the age of man being finite, this first man must have a beginning. So that an infinite succession of men should have been, is impossible; and consequently, that men were always. But I need not insist much upon this, because few or none of our modern atheists pitch upon this way. Besides that *Aristotle*, who is reputed the greatest asserter of the eternity of the world, doth acknowledge an infinite progress and succession of causes to be one of the greatest absurdities.

Suppose then the world began some time to be; it must either be made by counsel and design; that is, produced by some being that knew what it did, that did contrive and frame it as it is; which it is easy to conceive, a being that is infinitely good, and wise, and powerful, might do: but this is to own a God: or else the matter of it being supposed to have been always, and in continual motion and tumult, it at last happened to fall into this order, and the parts of matter after various agitations, were at length entangled and knit together in this order, in which we see the world to be. But can any man think this reasonable to imagine, that in the infinite variety which is in the world, all things should happen by chance, as well and as orderly as the greatest wisdom could have contrived them? Whoever can believe this, must do it with his will, and not with his understanding.

But seeing it must be granted that something is of itself; how easy is it to grant such a being to be of itself, as hath other perfections proportionable to necessary existence; that is infinitely good, and wise, and powerful? And there will be no difficulty in conceiving how such a being as this should make the world.

2. This likewise is undeniable, that mankind do generally consent in a confident persuasion that there is a God, whatever was the cause of this. Now the reason of so universal a consent in all places and ages of the world, must be one and constant: but no one and constant reason of this can be given, unless it be from the frame and nature of man's mind and understanding, which hath the notion of a deity stamped upon it, or, which is all one, hath such an understanding, as will in its own free use and exercise find out a God. And what more reasonable than to think, that if we be God's workmanship, he should set this mark of himself upon us, that we might know to whom we belong? And I dare say, that this account must needs be much more reasonable and satisfactory to any indifferent man, than to resolve this universal consent into tradition, or state policy, both which are liable to inexplicable difficulties, as * I have elsewhere shewn at large.

* See Vol. 1
Serm. 1. of
the Sermons
published by
his Grace
himself,
where the
arguments
here briefly
named are
handled at
large.

II. As to the immortality of the soul. Supposing a God, who is an infinite Spirit, it is easy to imagine the possibility of a finite spirit: and supposing the goodness of God, no man can doubt, but that when he made all things, he would make some best; and the same goodness which moved him to make things, would be a reason to continue those things for the longest duration they are capable of.

III. As to future rewards. Supposing the holiness and justice of God, that he loves righteousness, and hates iniquity; and that he is the magistrate and governor of the world, and concerned to countenance goodness, and discourage sin; and considering the promiscuous dispensation of his providence in this world, and how all things happen alike to all; it is most reasonable to conclude, that after this life, men shall be punished and rewarded.

Secondly, It is infinitely most prudent. In matters of great concernment a prudent man will incline to the safest side of the question. We have considered which side of these questions is most reasonable: let us now think which is safest. For it is certainly most prudent to incline to the safest side of the question. Supposing the

the reasons for and against the principles of religion were equal, yet the danger and hazard is so unequal, as would sway a prudent man to the affirmative. Suppose a man believe there is no God, nor life after this; and suppose he be in the right, but not certain that he is, (for that I am sure in this case is impossible;) all the advantage he hath by this opinion, relates only to this world and this present time: for he cannot be the better for it when he is not. Now what advantage will it be to him in this life? He shall have the more liberty to do what he pleaseth; that is, it furnishes him with a stronger temptation to be intemperate, and lustful, and unjust, that is, to do those things which prejudice his body and his health, which cloud his reason, and darken his understanding, which will make him enemies in the world, and will bring him into danger. So that it is no advantage to any man to be vicious: and yet this is the greatest use that is made of atheistical principles; to comfort men in their vicious courses. But if thou hast a mind to be virtuous, and temperate, and just, the belief of the principles of religion will be no obstacle, but a furtherance to thee in this course. All the advantage a man can hope for by disbelieving the principles of religion, is to escape trouble and persecution in this world, which may happen to him upon account of religion. But supposing there be a God, and a life after this; then what a vast difference is there of the consequences of these opinions! as much as between finite and infinite, time and eternity.

Secondly, To persuade men to believe the scriptures, I only offer this to men's consideration. If there be a God, whose providence governs the world, and all the creatures in it, is it not reasonable to think that he hath a particular care of men, the noblest part of this visible world? and seeing he hath made them capable of eternal duration; that he hath provided for their eternal happiness, and sufficiently revealed to them the way to it, and the terms and conditions of it: now let any man produce any book in the world, that pretends to be from God, and to do this; that for the matter of it, is so worthy of God, the doctrines whereof are so useful, and the precepts so reasonable, and the arguments so powerful, the truth of all which was confirm'd by so many great and unquestionable miracles, the relation of which hath been transmitted to posterity, in public and authentic records, written by those who were eye and ear witnesses of what they wrote, and free from suspicion of any worldly interest and design; let any produce a book like this, in all these respects; and which over and besides, hath by the power and reasonableness of the doctrines contained in it, prevailed so miraculously in the world, by weak and inconsiderable means, in opposition to all the wit and power of the world, and under such discouragements, as no other religion was ever assaulted with; let any man bring forth such a book, and he hath my leave to believe it as soon as the Bible. But if there be none such, as I am well assured there is not, then every one that thinks God hath revealed himself to men, ought to embrace and entertain the doctrine of the holy scriptures, as revealed by God.

And now having presented men with such arguments and considerations as are proper, and I think sufficient to induce belief, I think it not unreasonable to entreat and urge men diligently and impartially to consider these matters; and if there be weight in these considerations to sway reasonable men, that they would not suffer themselves to be biased by prejudice, or passion, or interest, to a contrary persuasion. Thus much I may with reason desire of men: for though men cannot believe what they will, yet men may, if they will, consider things seriously and impartially, and yield or withhold their assent, as they shall see cause, after a thorough search and examination.

If any man will offer a serious argument against any of the principles of religion, and will debate the matter soberly, as one that considers the infinite consequences of things one way or other, and would gladly be satisfied, he deserves to be heard what he can say: But if a man will turn religion into raillery, and confute it by two or three bold jests; he doth not make religion, but himself ridiculous, in the opinion of all considerate men; because he sports with his life.

So that it concerns every man that would not trifle away his soul, and fool himself into irrecoverable misery, with the greatest seriousness to enquire into these things, whether they be so or no, and patiently to consider the arguments that are brought for them.

And

And when you are examining these matters, do not take into consideration any sensual or worldly interest: but deal fairly and impartially with yourselves. Think with yourselves that you have not the making of things true or false; that the principles of religion are either true or false, before you think of them. The truth of things is already fix'd; either there is a God, or no God; either your souls are immortal, or they are not; either the scriptures are a divine revelation, or an imposture; one of these is certain and necessary, and they are not now to be alter'd. Things will not comply with your conceits, and bend themselves to your interests. Therefore do not think what you would have to be: but consider impartially

* Of this
see more in
the Sermon
above men-
tioned.

what is. *

And if, upon enquiry, you be convinced that it is the greatest reason and prudence to believe that there is a God, and a future state, and that the scriptures are the word of God; then meditate much of these things; attend to the proper consequences of such a persuasion; and resolve to live as becomes those who believe there is a God, and another life after this, and that it is best for you to obey the precepts of his word, being persuaded that whatever is there promis'd in case of obedience, or threaten'd in case of disobedience, will certainly be accomplish'd.

And labour to strengthen yourselves in this belief; because faith is the spring of all rational actions, and the root of all other graces; and according to the strength and weakness of faith, your holiness, and obedience, and graces, will flourish and decay.

And because the matters of faith do not fall under our senses, and the things of another world are invisible, and at distance, and consequently not so apt to affect us, as present and sensible things, we should take the more pains with ourselves, that by revolving frequently in our minds the thoughts of God, and representing to ourselves the happiness and misery of another world, they may have as great an effect upon us, as if they were present to us, and we saw them with our bodily eyes.

S E R M O N CLXXI.

Of the Christian Faith, the Means of its Conveyance, and our Obligation to receive it.

J O H N xx. 11.

But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The first
Sermon on
this Text.

I Have largely discoursed concerning the general nature of faith, and more particularly concerning the faith which is truly divine and religious: in the latitude of which is contained a persuasion concerning the principles of natural religion, the being of God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state; and a persuasion of the divine revelation of the scriptures, and the matters contained in them. Now among matters of divine revelation, the doctrine of the gospel is a principal part; which is the last and most perfect revelation, which God hath made to the world, by his Son Jesus Christ; and a firm belief and persuasion of this, is that which is called *christian faith*, or *the faith of the gospel*; and which, by way of eminency, is usually called *faith* in the New Testament.

Now christian faith is not opposed to a divine faith, but is comprehended under it; as being a principal and eminent part of divine faith, but not all that which may be called divine faith; christian faith supposeth a belief of the principles of natural religion; and a belief of those revelations which God formerly made under the Old Testament: but it doth only formally contain in it a belief

of

of the gospel, viz. That revelation which God hath in these last days made to the world by his Son *Jesus Christ*. The Heathens who were destitute of divine revelation, did only believe the principles of natural religion; and the generality of them did not believe those but in a very imperfect manner. The *Jews*, to whom were committed the oracles of God, did superadd to the belief of the principles of natural religion, the belief of such revelations as God was pleased to make to them under that dispensation. Christian faith superadds to both the former, a belief of the revelation of the gospel.

I shall now therefore, by God's assistance, endeavour to open to you the nature of christian faith from these words; in which you have these *three* things considerable.

First, The end of committing the gospel to writing, which was to persuade men to believe in Christ, to propagate and continue christian faith in the world; *these things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*: and by faith to bring men to a participation of those benefits, and the salvation which Christ was the author of: *And that believing ye might have life through his name*. These were written; ταῦτα, these, which may either refer to σημεῖα, these signs or miracles, referring to the former verse, and many other signs, &c. but these signs or miracles are written to confirm Jesus to be the person he pretended to be, the *Messias*, the son of God, and consequently to confirm the truth of the doctrine which he delivered; that by this confirmation, men might be induced to believe him to be the true *Messias*, and to give entertainment to his doctrine.

Or else (which is very probable) the word ταῦτα may refer to the whole history of the gospel, in which you have an account of the life of Christ, and the doctrine which he taught, and the miracles which were wrought for the confirmation of it. And so we may look upon these two verses as a conclusion of the whole history of the gospel writ by the four evangelists. For as for the chapter following, it seems not to be written by St. *John* himself, but by the church, probably, as *Grotius* conjectures, by the church of *Ephesus*, where he had resided, and whom he had acquainted with the particulars which are there set down; the principal of which is, the prediction of our Saviour concerning his long life, for the sake of which the rest of the story seems to be brought in; which particular was not fit to be recorded 'till after his death; I say, it seems probable that St. *John* ended his gospel here, and that the last chapter was added by others, as the last chapter of the *Pentateuch* was added by some other after the death of *Moses*; and the last chapter of *Joshua* after his death. And this seems very evident from the 24th verse of the chapter; where, after a relation of our Saviour's prediction, concerning the disciple whom Jesus lov'd, 'tis added, *this is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things*, (that is, the foregoing history of the gospel) and we know that his testimony is true; which seems plainly to be spoken by some other persons: for it were improper for him to say this of himself, *We know that his testimony is true*.

So that here seems to be an end of the history of Christ which St. *John* wrote; and these two verses seem to be the conclusion of the whole gospel written by the four evangelists, and then the sense of them will be this; *Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book*; that is, the disciples were witnesses of many other miracles which Christ wrought, which they did not think necessary to set down in this book, that is, in this history of Christ written by the four evangelists: *But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name*; that is, these things which are recorded in this history, this account which is here given of the life and actions and doctrine, and miracles of Christ, is sufficient to bring men to the faith of the gospel, to satisfy men that Christ was the *Messias*, the Son of God, and consequently that his doctrine is true.

And that this conclusion doth refer to the whole history of the gospel written by the four evangelists, I am induced to believe upon these two accounts.

1. Because St. *John's* gospel doth not seem to be intended for a history of the life and actions of Christ: but an appendix to the history which had been written before by the other evangelists, and to supply only what they had omitted.

Therefore you find that he gives no account of the genealogy or birth of our Saviour, nor of his sermon upon the mount, which did contain the sum of his doctrine, nor of any of his miracles, or his other discourses, which are related by the other evangelists; nor doth he relate any more of the history of his Life, than was just necessary to bring in, and connect those things which he thought fit to superadd to the former history. So that considering how defective this gospel, taken by itself, is, in the most essential parts of the history of the life, and doctrine, and actions of Christ; no man can think that St. *John* did intend this for a full and sufficient account of the life, and doctrine, and miracles of Christ; or that upon this imperfect relation, in which he had knowingly omitted many of the most material and considerable things belonging to the history of Christ, he could expect that men should receive full satisfaction concerning him. Therefore I think it is highly reasonable, and almost necessary to conclude, that when he says, *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*; he does not solely refer to the gospel which was written by himself; but to the whole history of the gospel, which was put together into one book or volume, which was completed by this appendix.

2. Another reason I have for this, which doth much strengthen this conjecture, is what I find in *Eusebius*, in the 18th chapter of the third book of his history, where he tells us to this purpose, "That St. *John*, who lived the last of the apostles, did revise what they had written of the history of Christ, and added his gospel as "an appendix to the rest."

I have insisted the longer upon this, that no man might think, when St. *John* says, *These things were written that ye might believe*, that his gospel taken alone and by itself is a sufficient account of Christ, and contains all that was requisite to bring men to believe on him. This is the first thing in the words, the end of committing the gospel to writing.

Secondly, You have here the nature of Christian faith described; it is a believing that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*; that is, that he is the true *Messias* prophesied of in the Old Testament, and promised as the Saviour of the world; and that he is the Son of God, who came from the Father into the world; and took our nature upon him, that he might teach us and go before us in the way to eternal happiness.

Thirdly, The blessed effect of this faith, or the benefit that redounds to us upon believing, *that believing, ye might have life through his name*; that is, that upon these terms and conditions you might be made partakers of all those blessings and benefits which Christ, the Saviour of the world, hath purchased for us, which are here set forth to us in the name of *life*; it being usual in the phrase of scripture, to express to us those things which are most excellent and desirable by *life*. Now the principal benefits which Christ hath purchased, and which in scripture we are said to be made partakers of by believing, are regeneration, justification or pardon of sin, and eternal life and salvation; and the two first of these, as well as the last, are called *life* in scripture. Regeneration, (in which I include the continuance and progress of this work, which is sanctification) that is, a new life, *Rom. vi. 4.* it is called *newness of life*. And we are said to have this life by faith, *Gal. ii. 20.* *And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* And *Col. ii. 12.* *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him*; that is, regenerated and born to a new life. How? By the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead; that is, by believing the power of God, who raised up Christ from the dead, for the confirmation of the truth of the gospel; 1 *John v. 1.* *Whoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* So likewise justification is called *life*. While we are under sentence of condemnation, we are dead in law: but being justified and pardoned, we are restored to life. So the apostle expresseth it, *Rom. v. 18.* *So by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.* And that we are justified by faith, the scripture tells us so frequently, that I shall not cite any texts for it.

And then eternal life and salvation; and this is the consummation of all, and I doubt not but is here principally intended in the text by the word *life*. So that the meaning of this expression, *that believing ye might have life through his name*, is

is, that by faith of the gospel, ye might be renewed, and pardoned, and saved; though I think that the last, *viz.* eternal life and salvation, is principally, though not solely intended, as will appear by comparing this place with these parallel texts, *John* iii. 15. *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* And ver. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life.* *John* v. 24. *He that beareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.* 1 *Pet.* i. 9. *The end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*

Thus I have, as briefly as I well could, explained to you the meaning of the words, which I have done the more fully, that you may see how those observations which I shall raise from them, are contained in them. The observations are these:

First, That writing is the way which the wisdom of God hath pitched upon, as the standing way to convey the knowledge of the gospel to the world. *These things are written.*

Secondly, That all things necessary to be believed in order to salvation, are contained in the gospel. *These things are written that ye might believe, and believing might have life:* but if any thing necessary to be believed by Christians, in order to eternal salvation, were omitted, then the gospel would be written to no purpose, and would fail in the end for which it was written.

Thirdly, That the miracles related in the gospel are a proper and sufficient means or argument, to bring men to Christian faith. For this is the narrowest and most restrained sense in which we can take the words; *These things*, that is, *These miracles are written that ye might believe, &c.* Now if St. *John* by the Spirit of God did record miracles to this end, we may conclude that they are proper and sufficient for this end.

Fourthly, That a credible history does give men sufficient assurance of matter of fact, and such as we may safely build a divine faith upon. For if these miracles were recorded for this end, *That men might believe*, then a credible history or relation that such miracles were done, is sufficient to assure us that such miracles were wrought; and upon this assurance we may build our faith: otherwise it had been in vain to have recorded these miracles to this end.

Fifthly, That we are not now-a-days destitute of a sufficient ground of faith; because we have these writings credibly conveyed to us, which contain the doctrine of the gospel, and the relation of the miracles written for the confirmation of it.

Sixthly, That men now-a-days, those to whom the gospel comes, are under an obligation to believe; or, which is all one, that now-a-days men may be guilty of such a sin as unbelief: for now-a-days we may have sufficient grounds of faith.

Seventhly, That to believe that *Jesus* is the *Christ* the Son of God, is truly and properly Christian faith. This is the description which is here given of it, that it is a believing, that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, the Son of God.

Eighthly, That to believe that *Jesus* is the *Christ* the Son of God, is truly and properly sanctifying, and justifying, and saving faith; by this faith we have life. *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.*

These observations are all virtually contained in these words. The greatest part of them I shall very lightly pass over, and speak but briefly to them, because I intend mainly to insist upon the *two* last; in the handling of which, I shall open to you the nature of Christian faith, and shew you, that the faith which is here described, is that which is truly and properly justifying and saving.

First, That writing is the way which the wisdom of God hath pitched upon, as the standing way of conveying the knowledge of the gospel to the world. This is matter of fact, and for the proof of it we have the evidence of the thing. The gospel *de facto* was written, and this writing is conveyed down to us, and is the instrument which God hath in all ages since the apostles time, that is, since the eye and ear witnesses of the miracles of Christ and his doctrine ceased, made use of to convey to the world the knowledge of the gospel. And here it were proper to shew what advantage this way of conveyance of the gospel hath above oral tradition: but that I have already done * in some former discourses, where I shewed at large, that this way of conveyance is a more universal and diffusive, a more

* See the foregoing Sermons in this Vol.

certain, and liable to less imposture and falsification, a more equal and uniform, and a more human way of conveyance than oral tradition; so that I shall not insist longer upon this.

Secondly, That all things necessary to be believed by Christians in order to salvation, are contained in the written gospel: or else how could St. *John* in reason say, that *these things are written*, to this end, *that men might believe and be saved*; if these things be not sufficient to this end? which certainly they are not, if any thing necessary to be believed in order to salvation be left out. The Papists being urged with this text, to prove the sufficiency of the written word, in opposition to those traditional doctrines which they pretend to be necessary over and besides the written word, tell us, that St. *John* doth not here speak of the doctrine of Christ; but only of his miracles; These are written to confirm our faith of the *Messias*; but the doctrine of Christ was not all written, but left to the apostles to be delivered by mouth to their successors, and so down to posterity. But I have shewn before, that the necessary doctrines of the gospel, as well as the miracles, are comprehended in these things which St. *John* says *were written*. Besides that it will be very hard for any man to devise a convenient reason, why miracles, as well as doctrines, might not have been left to the apostles, to have been traditionally delivered down to posterity without writing. For doctrines may as well be committed to writing, as relations of miracles: and miracles may be with as much ease, and certainty, and convenience in all respects, delivered down to posterity by an oral tradition, as doctrines may.

* See the
foregoing
Sermons
in this Vol.

Thirdly, That the miracles related in the gospel, are a proper and sufficient means to bring men to Christian faith. That they are so, it is a good sign, that God did work them to this end, and afterwards commit them to writing for this very reason, that the knowledge of them might be conveyed to posterity, and there might still remain in the world a proper and sufficient argument to persuade men to believe; and we may well imagine, that God would not do any thing but what is very proper and sufficient for its end. Now that miracles were wrought by the divine power purposely to this end, and that they are in reason a very sufficient attestation to a person, and confirmation of the doctrine which he brings, I have largely shewn elsewhere*; and that all along both in the Old and New Testament, God did empower *Moses* and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, to work miracles, to bring men to faith, and that this was the principal argument whereby those who did believe were wrought upon.

Fourthly, That credible history doth give men sufficient assurance of matter of fact; and such assurance, as we may safely build a divine faith upon. We freely believe innumerable things, which are said to have been done many ages before we were born, and make not the least doubt of them, only upon the credit of history: so that if the relation of miracles be but granted to be a credible history, we may upon the credit of the relation safely believe that such miracles were wrought; and if such miracles were wrought, we may safely believe the doctrine to be from God, for the confirmation of which they were wrought; and consequently, a divine faith may be safely built upon such an assurance of miracles, as we may have from a credible history and relation.

Fifthly, That we are not now-a-days destitute of a sufficient ground of faith; because the doctrine of the gospel hath still the same confirmation that it had, *viz. miracles*: only we who live at this distance from the time when, and the place where they were wrought, have the knowledge of them conveyed to us, and come to be assured of them in another way. Those who lived in the age of Christ and his apostles, had assurance of miracles from their own senses: and we now are assured of them by credible history and relation. Now though these ways be not equal; yet they are both sufficient to beget in us an undoubted assurance, and such as no prudent man hath any reason to doubt of. For a man may be as truly and undoubtedly certain, that is, as well satisfied, that a thing was done, from the credit of history, as from his own senses. I make no more doubt whether there was such a person as *Henry* the VIIIth. King of *England*, than I do whether I be in this place.

Sixthly, That now-a-days, those to whom the gospel comes, are under an obligation to believe; or that now-a-days there is such a sin as unbelief of the gospel

pel. And I the rather note this, because there are some well-wishers to *Atheism*, who out of prudence and regard to their own safety, chuse rather secretly to undermine religion, than openly to deny it. I grant indeed, that in our Saviour's time, when such great miracles were wrought, those who saw those miracles (which they think no body did) were under an obligation to believe, and guilty of a great sin in not believing the gospel: but now-a-days, when we see no such miracles wrought for the confirmation of the gospel, there lies no obligation upon any man to believe it; and that now there is no such sin as unbelief. Now any man may with half an eye see the consequence of this assertion: for being once admitted, it doth as certainly destroy christian religion, as if men should deny that there was any such person as *Jesus Christ*, or that he ever wrought any miracles: for if to disbelieve the gospel be no sin, and consequently brings a man into no danger; but on the other hand, dangers and persecutions do attend the belief and profession of it; it were the greatest folly in the world for any man to believe; unless this possibly may be greater, for a man who does believe it, not to obey and live according to it. And if this were true, it were the greatest imprudence that can be, for any man to be a christian. And if that were once admitted, there's all the reason in the world that christianity should be banished and extirpated; not only as useless and impertinent, but as a thing dangerous and pernicious to the welfare of mankind.

I shall therefore briefly prove to you, that it is now one of the greatest sins that men are capable of, (except the sin against the Holy Ghost) for those who have the gospel sufficiently propounded to them, to disbelieve it; I say, except the sin against the Holy Ghost, which our Saviour tells us, was *blaspheming the Spirit of God*, whereby he wrought his miracles, and saying it was the spirit of the devil; and this sin, men in a lower degree and proportion may now-a-days be guilty of: for as the *Pharisees* who saw the works that Christ did, and acknowledged them to be miracles, did commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, in ascribing those miracles, which were really wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, to the power of the devil; so men now-a-days who own the history of Christ's miracles as true, may be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, in a lower proportion, by maliciously imputing those miracles to the power of the devil.

But excepting the sin against the Holy Ghost, the greatest sin that men are now capable of, is to disbelieve the gospel, when it is sufficiently propounded to them. Now the gospel is then sufficiently propounded, when there are sufficient grounds offered to persuade men to the belief of it; and I have already proved, that we now have sufficient ground to believe the gospel; and if so, then whosoever hath these grounds offered to him, is under an obligation to believe it: for every man is bound to believe that, for which he hath sufficient ground and reason; and every man sins who neglects his duty, that is, does not do that which he stands bound to do.

And not only whoever disbelieves the gospel, sins in so doing, but farther, he commits the greatest sin that now men are capable of. I say *now* capable of: for I doubt not but that it was a sin of a higher degree, for those who saw Christ's miracles to disbelieve, than it is for us who have only the relation of them. For by the same reason, that *he is more blessed that believes, and hath not seen*; a greater curse belongs to him, *who hath seen, and yet doth not believe*; and consequently such a person is guilty of a greater sin. But because we cannot now see the miracles of Christ, the greatest sin that men in this age are capable of, is to disbelieve the gospel confirmed by miracles, whereof we are assured by credible relation. For the sin of disbelieving now hath these *two* aggravations.

1. It is against sufficient light and evidence; and in this it is equal to the sins which are committed against natural light.

2. It is a sin against the greatest mercies and blessings that ever were offered to the world; and in this it exceeds the sins against natural light. Whoever disbelieves the gospel, he rejects the offer of eternal life and happiness. And these two aggravations the apostle puts together, *Heb. ii. 3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed*

confirmed unto us by them that heard him! And if this be thus, it highly concerns us to enquire into the nature of this faith; and this brings me to the

Seventh observation; That to believe that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, the Son of God, is truly and properly christian faith. But the consideration of this I shall leave to the next opportunity.

SERMON CLXXII.

Of the Christian Faith, which Sanctifies, Justifies, and Saves.

JOHN xx. 31.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

*The second
Sermon on
this Text.*

IN my former discourse upon these words, I proposed *eight* observations from them, *six* of which I have already dispatch'd, designing to discourse of the remaining *two* more at large. I proceed therefore to the

Seventh observation which I laid down, *viz.* That to believe that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, the Son of God, is truly and properly christian faith. This is the description which is here given of christian faith.

In prosecution of this, I shall do these *two* things.

First, Shew you what is included in *believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*.

Secondly, Prove that this is truly and properly christian faith.

First, What is included in *believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*? It signifies a firm and effectual persuasion, that *Jesus*, that is, the person the history of whose life and death is related in the gospel, is *the Christ*, that is, the true *Messias*, promised and prophesied of in the Old Testament to be the Saviour of the world; and that he is *the Son of God*, that is, *the only begotten of the Father*, who was sent by him into the world, and took our nature upon him, that he might purchase eternal happiness for us, and instruct us, and go before us in the way to it. So that faith is a firm and effectual persuasion of, or assent to the whole gospel. Faith signifies christian religion, which comprehends an assent to the doctrines of the gospel, and a suitable life and conversation.

I say a *firm* persuasion of this; for in the phrase of the New Testament, none are accounted true believers, or said to have a true faith in Christ, who do not firmly continue in this persuasion; and the owning and profession of it, notwithstanding all the sufferings and persecutions it might expose them to. And an *effectual* persuasion, for none are said truly to believe in Christ, who do not shew forth the proper and genuine effects of this faith, who do not live as they believe, and conform their lives to that doctrine, to the truth whereof they profess an assent.

And hence it is that true christians, that is, those who did fashion their lives according to the gospel, are called *believers*, and the sum of all christianity is usually contained in this word *believing*, which is the great principle of a christian life; as in the Old Testament, all religion is express'd by the *faith of God*; so in the New, by *faith in Christ*.

Now whosoever doth firmly and effectually entertain this truth, that that *Jesus*, whom the gospel declares to us, is the true *Messias*, and Saviour of the world,

world, and the very Son of God, sent by him into the world for this purpose, that he might by his doctrine instruct, and by the example of his life go before us in the way to eternal happiness, and by the merit and satisfaction of his death and sufferings, appease and reconcile God to men, and purchase for them the pardon of their sins and eternal life, upon the conditions of faith and repentance, and sincere obedience; I say, whosoever doth firmly and effectually entertain these truths, will consequently endeavour to obey the precepts of his doctrine, and to imitate the example of his life, and will expect salvation, that is, the pardon of his sins, and eternal life from no other; because he is verily persuaded he is a Teacher, and a Saviour sent from God, that his doctrine is true, and his satisfaction available, and that the rewards which he hath promised to those who believe and obey him, and the punishments which he hath threaten'd to the unbelievers and disobedient, shall all certainly be fulfilled and accomplished. All this is included in *believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*. So Christian faith, or the faith of the gospel, contains plainly in it these particulars.

1. An assent of the understanding to this truth, That *Jesus Christ* the Son of God, was a person commission'd from heaven, and employ'd by God to bring men to eternal happiness. And this fundamental is necessary to all the subsequent acts of faith, and that upon which they depend.

2. An assent of the understanding to the truth of all those things which this person delivered to the world. So that if he tells us, that his death hath made expiation for the sins of men, upon the conditions of faith and repentance and obedience, and that God by him doth command the world to do such and such things, and in case of obedience will confer such and such rewards upon men, but in case of disobedience will inflict such punishments upon them; we are to believe all this to be true; because the person who acquainted us with these things was sent by God, and employ'd from heaven upon this message.

3. And consequently, a relying and depending upon him, and no other, for the conferring of these benefits, and making good these promises to us.

4. Obedience to all his laws and commands; because believing them to be from God, we cannot but assent to them as good, and as laying an obligation upon us to yield obedience to them: and if we do not obey them, we are presumed to disbelieve them; for if we did truly and heartily believe them to be the commands of God, we would obey them.

Now that obedience of heart and life to the precepts and commands of the gospel, as well as an assent of the understanding to the truth of the gospel-revelation, and a trusting and relying upon the merits of Christ, is included in the scripture notion of faith, will evidently appear to any that will consider these texts. *Rom. i. 5. By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name*; where the belief of the gospel is called *the obedience of faith*. *Rom. x. 16. But they have not all obeyed the gospel: for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?* But if faith do not include obedience, how could he prove that there were some that did not obey the gospel, because *Isaiah* said, there were some that did not believe it? And so likewise by comparing *1 Tim. iv. 10.* where he is said to be *the Saviour of them that believe*, with *Heb. v. 9.* where he is said to be *the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*. As also by comparing *Gal. v. 6.* where it is said, *For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision: but faith which worketh by love*, with *1 Cor. vii. 19. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing: but the keeping of the commandments of God*. And so likewise by those texts, where *unbelief* and *disobedience* are equivalently used. I will but mention one, *Heb. iii. 12.* The apostle, from the example of the *Israelites*, cautions Christians against unbelief: *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*. And repeating the same caution in the next chapter, at the 11th verse, he varies the phrase a little, *Lest any man fall after the same example of disobedience*, the word is ἀπειθείας, which indeed our translators render *unbelief*, but that confirms that which I bring it for, that *disobedience* and *unbelief* are the same. And so likewise we find *faith* and *disobedience* opposed frequently in scripture. *John iii. 36. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not*
the

the Son, shall not see life. In the Greek it is, *he that obeyeth not the Son*, as you will see in the margin of the bible. 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.* And this doth likewise appear in all those texts, wherein repentance, and our forgiving of others, and several other acts of obedience are made the conditions of our justification; or the omission of them, sins, as well as faith. So that we cannot be said *to be justified by faith alone*, unless that *faith* include in it *obedience*. I have insisted the longer upon this, because the right understanding the scripture-notion of faith in Christ, doth very much depend upon this: and if this one thing, that the scripture-notion of faith doth include in it obedience to the precepts of the gospel, were but well understood and consider'd, it would silence and put an end to those infinite controversies about faith and justification, which have so much troubled the Christian world, to the great prejudice of practical religion, and holiness of life.

Secondly, That this is truly and properly Christian faith. Which I shall prove by these two arguments.

1. Because it includes a belief of the whole gospel, or of all the revelation which God hath made to the world by *Jesus Christ*. And certainly, there cannot be a more proper notion of christian faith, than to believe the revelation which God hath made by Jesus Christ: but to believe that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, the *Son of God*, doth include this. For whosoever believes him to be the *Messias*, and the Son of God, believes him to have come from God, and to be authorized and commissioned by him to make known his mind to the world, and consequently will believe whatever he delivers. For whoever believes the goodness and veracity of God, as every man does that believes a God, cannot but assent to the truth of every thing which he is satisfied comes from God.

2. That *to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, is truly and properly Christian faith, or the faith of the gospel, will appear, by considering how the scriptures of the New Testament do constantly describe to us the faith of the gospel; and you shall find they do it, either by the very phrase in the text, or other phrases or metaphors equivalent to them, or else by a belief of that which is the great argument and confirmation of Christ's being the *Messias* the Son of God. Very often the faith of the gospel is described by the very phrase in the text, *believing that Jesus is the Christ*, and that *he is the Son of God*. John iv. 41, 42. *And many more believed, because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* John vi. 96. *And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* John xi. 27. *says Martha to Christ, Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* Acts viii. 37. *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* 1 John iii. 23. *And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment, that is, that we should believe on him under this name and title of Jesus Christ the Son of God.* 1 John v. 1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* And ver. 5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* And ver. 10. *He that believeth on the Son of God, that is, believeth Jesus to be the Son of God.* And ver. 13. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

Sometimes the faith of the gospel is described to us by other phrases that are tantamount to these; such as signify that *he came from God*, and was sent by him into the world, and was the *Messias* whom they expected. John iii. 2. *Nicodemus describes his faith in Christ thus; I know that thou art a teacher come from God.* John vi. 29. *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent, that is, that ye believe me to be sent from God.* John viii. 24. *For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins, that is, if ye believe not that I am the Messias, whom you expect and look for.* And so John xiii. 19. *That ye may believe that I am he.* And John xi. 42, *That they may believe that thou hast sent me.* And John xvi. 30. *By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.* And John xvii. 8. *They have believed that thou didst send me.*

Sometimes

Sometimes the faith of the gospel is express'd by metaphors equivalent to these expressions, as by *coming to Christ*, and *receiving him* as the true *Messias*, in several places, and sometimes by believing that which is the great argument and confirmation that *Christ* was the true *Messias* the son of God, that is, believing his resurrection from the dead. *Rom. iv. 24. To whom it shall be imputed for righteousness, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.* *Rom. x. 9. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* *Col. ii. 12. Through the faith of the operation of God, who raised him up from the dead.* Where faith is described by a belief of the power whereby Christ was raised from the dead. And to mention no more, *1 Pet. i. 21. who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead.* Now the reason why the faith of the gospel is described by the belief of *Christ's* resurrection, is, because whoever believes that *Christ* was raised from the dead, cannot but be satisfied, that this great miracle was a sufficient attestation that he was no impostor, but that he was what he pretended to be, *viz. the son of God*; and consequently that he ought to be believed and obey'd in all things. And thus much may suffice to have spoken to this *seventh* observation.

Eighth Observation; That *to believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God*, is truly and properly sanctifying, and justifying, and saving faith. So the text tells us, that this faith gives us life; *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*, that is, as I explain'd this phrase in the opening of the text, that upon these terms and conditions ye might be made partakers of all those blessings and benefits, which Christ, the Saviour of the world, hath purchased, which are here set forth under the name of *life*; it being usual in the phrase of scripture to set forth to us those things which are most excellent and desirable, by *life*, which men value above all other things. Now the principal benefits which Christ hath purchased, and which we are said to be made partakers of by believing, are,

1. Regeneration; under which I include the continuance and progress of this work, which is sanctification.

2. Justification; by which I cannot find that the scripture means any more than pardon or remission of sins.

3. Eternal life; and this I think is principally, though not solely intended here in the text, as I have shewn, by comparing the text with other parallel texts in the same evangelist. *John iii. 15. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* And ver. 36. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.* I say, I think eternal life is here principally intended, though this suppose the other, regeneration, and justification, before we can attain it, which may also very well be included here in the term of *life*. My reasons are these:

1. Because I find in scripture, that regeneration and justification are express'd by the name of *life*. *Rom. vi. 4. our regeneration is called newness of life*, because before we were *dead in sins and trespasses*; and *Rom. v. 18. Justification is called justification of life*, because while our sins are unpardoned, and we are under the sentence of condemnation, we are dead in law; but being justified and pardoned, we are, as it were, restored to life again.

2. Because, in the phrase of scripture, we are said to be regenerate, and sanctified, and justified by faith, as well as saved. *1 John v. 1. He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* *Gal. ii. 20. The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God*; speaking of the new life of sanctification. And *Col. ii. we are said to be risen with Christ*, that is, born to a new life, *by the faith of the operation of God, that raised up Jesus from the dead*; and *to be justified by faith*, in innumerable places. So that it is very probable upon these accounts that the evangelist here, when he says, *that believing, you might have life in his name*, doth intend to take in regeneration and justification, as well as eternal life, which is the consummation of all the blessings of the gospel. I come now to the observation, *viz.*

That this faith of the gospel, which I have describ'd, is truly and properly a sanctifying, and justifying, and saving faith.

I. I shall shew that it is properly a sanctifying faith.

II. A justifying and saving faith.

I. It is truly sanctifying. I know that this term of a sanctifying faith, is not much in use among divines, and therefore it may seem a little more strange: but they might have used it if they had pleased, for it is every whit as proper to call faith, *sanctifying*, as *justifying*, or *saving*. It is true indeed, this express term of a *sanctifying faith* is no where in scripture; no more are the very terms of *justifying* and *saving faith*: but we are said to be *justified* and *saved by faith* in scripture, which is as much as if the terms had been used. And we are said also to be *sanctified by faith*, as well as *justified* and *saved*. Acts xv. 9. Our *hearts* are said to be *purified by faith*. And so likewise, our *victory over the world*, that is, our conquering and subduing of our covetous and ambitious and sensual lusts and desires, are in a peculiar manner ascribed to this *faith* which I have described. 1 John v. 4, 5. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

II. That this faith is truly and properly justifying and saving faith. I put these, *justification* and *sanctification*, together, partly because they are of the same consideration, as to the influence which faith hath upon them; and the latter follows upon the former; for if we be *justified by faith*, that is, have our sins pardoned, by the same act of faith we are *saved* from hell, and consequently made capable of eternal life; I say, by the very same act of faith that we obtain the pardon of our sins, we are saved from hell, that is, the punishment due to sin; for pardon removes the guilt, and guilt is nothing else but an obligation to punishment: and partly, because I find the scripture useth them promiscuously. When St. James disputes about justification by faith, he useth the term of being *saved by faith*, James ii. 14. *Can faith save him?* Sometimes of being *justified*, ver. 24. *So that a man is not justified by faith only.*

In speaking to this proposition, that the faith of the gospel, which I have described, is properly justifying and saving faith, I shall do these *six* things.

1. Shew that justification in scripture signifies no more than the pardon and remission of sins.

2. That faith can in no propriety of language be said to be the instrument of our pardon.

3. That the influence that the faith of the gospel, which I have described, hath upon the pardon of sin, is this, that it is the whole and entire condition required on our parts, upon the performance of which God hath promised to pardon our sins, and to save us.

4. That the scripture, where it treats of justification by faith, speaks of this faith which I have described, and no other.

5. That no metaphorical descriptions of justifying faith are allowable, any farther than as they serve to illustrate and make clear the plain and simple notion of the thing. For if metaphors once come to be insisted on, and strained, and consequences come to be drawn from them, and doctrines founded, and theories built upon them, they are of very ill consequence, and serve to no other purpose but to blind and obscure the plain and simple notions of things, and to seduce and mislead the understandings of men, and to multiply controversies without end.

And I the rather take notice of this abuse of metaphors upon this subject, because I do not know any other head of divinity which hath suffered so much by them as the doctrine of justifying faith; whereby the plain truth hath been very much obscured, and occasion minister'd to many endless disputes.

6. That if this plain and simple notion of justifying faith were admitted, it would supersede all those controversies about justification, which have so much troubled the church. These particulars I shall by God's assistance speak to, not out of a mind to oppose and contradict others; (what a pitiful design is that! and how much below one that is to speak to men, in the name and fear of God) but out of a hearty desire to bring the truth to light, and to contribute something to the clearing of that which is of so great importance and concernment to Christian religion.

1. That justification of a sinner in scripture, signifies no more than the pardon of sin. That there are several acceptations of the word justification in the New Testament, I deny not. Sometimes it signifies approbation in general of a thing, or person. So the word is used, Luke vii. 29. *And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. Justified God;*

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How is that? that is, they approved and followed his counsel, as appears evidently by the opposition in the next words; *but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.* Those that rejected the counsel of God, are opposed to those that justified God. And so at the 35th ver. *But Wisdom is justified of her children,* that is, approved. And so very probably it may be understood in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, *I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;* that is, of the two, God did rather approve of his humble carriage, than the Pharisee's proud and insolent behaviour. Sometimes it signifies any proof or declaration of a thing. So *Rom. iii. 4. Let God be true, but every man a liar, as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged;* that is, that all thy words or promises might be proved and declared to be true, and that thou mayest prevail whenever thou art impleaded by men of unfaithfulness and unrighteousness. And so *1 Tim. iii. 16.* Christ is said to be *justified in the Spirit;* that is, by the testimony of the Spirit concerning him; as also by the miracles which he wrought by the Holy Ghost, and the miraculous gifts of the Spirit which were poured forth on the apostles, he was proved and declared to be the true *Messias*, and the Son of God. And this phrase of Christ's *being justified by the Spirit*, seems to be of the same sense with that expression, *Rom. i. 4. Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;* that is, he was evidently proved to be the Son of God, by the great miracle of his resurrection, which was wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost. But most frequently, to justify, in scripture, signifies to pardon.

Thus the word justify, doth signify variously, according to the subject or matter it is applied to: but when it is applied to a sinner, it signifies nothing else but pardon of his sin. Nor can I possibly apprehend what other notion men can frame to themselves of a sinner's being justified, distinct from pardon and remission. Indeed if a person be not really guilty, that is, unjustly accused of a crime, he may be said to be justified, when he is cleared from the charge and accusation which is brought against him: but if a man be guilty, he cannot otherwise be said to be justified than by having the guilt removed; that is, by being pardoned. And that the scripture understands the same thing by justification, and pardon, or remission of sins, is, I think, very evident from these two texts, *Acts xiii. 38, 39. That through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins;* that is, in and through Jesus Christ, the way of pardon and forgiveness is declared, and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses; that is, according to this declaration, all that do believe, are by him, that is, by the virtue of his sacrifice, acquitted and cleared from the guilt of all those sins, for which there was no way of expiation provided by the law of Moses, that is, of presumptuous sins, for which there was no sacrifice, but the man was to be cut off. Now if the meaning of this text be this, that in and through Christ the way of pardon and forgiveness is declared, and accordingly all that do believe in him are pardoned, then to be justified and pardoned are all one in this place; but this is the meaning of the text, if by the phrase of being *justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses*, be meant the pardoning of such sins and transgressions, for which by the law of Moses, there was no way of expiation: but this must of necessity be the meaning of this phrase; for what are those things, from which it is said, *we could not be justified by the law of Moses*, but sinful transgressions and violations of the law? and how can a man be said to be *justified from any sin and transgression*, otherwise than by the pardon and forgiveness of it? The other text is *Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* The man unto whom God imputeth righteousness, is the man whom God justifies. Now, how does David describe the blessedness of the man whom God justifies? Thus, *blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*, which is a metaphorical expression of the same thing, covering of sin being the pardoning of it. From hence I reason, if according to the apostle those propositions be equivalent, *Blessed is the man whose*
iniquities

iniquities are forgiven, and blessed is the man whom God justifies, then according to the apostle, justification and forgiveness of sins are all one: but those propositions are equivalent, if the apostle cite the text out of the *Psalms* pertinently.

2. That faith can in no tolerable propriety of language be said to be the instrument of our pardon, and consequently not of our justification. An instrument is something subordinate to the principal efficient cause, and made use of by it to produce the effect; and this in natural and artificial causes may be understood, but what notion to have of a moral instrument, I confess I am at a loss. But to bring the business out of the clouds, we may thus conceive of the pardon of sin. God in the gospel hath entered into a covenant of grace and mercy with sinners; one of the benefits promised by God in the covenant, is pardon of sin. The conditions upon which we shall be made partakers of the benefit, are comprehended in this one word, *faith*, which signifies the whole of christian religion, *viz.* such an effectual assent to the revelation of the gospel, as doth produce repentance, and sincere obedience, and a trust and confidence in Christ alone for salvation. The procuring or meritorious cause of this benefit, *viz.* the pardon of our sins, is the death of Christ, which is called his blood or sacrifice. The principal efficient cause of our pardon is God in the sentence of the law, or which is all one, in the tenour of this covenant, declaring us pardoned upon these terms and conditions. Now how can faith, which is an act on our parts, and the condition to be performed by us, be said to be an instrument in the hand of God of our pardon; unless men will think fit to call a condition an instrument, which I think no propriety of language will allow.

I should now proceed to the *third* particular which I proposed, but shall refer that to my next discourse on this argument.

SERMON CLXXIII.

Of Justifying Faith.

JOHN xx. 31.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

*The third
Sermon on
this Text.*

THE observation I am discoursing upon is this, that to believe that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, the Son of God, is truly and properly sanctifying, and justifying, and saving faith. I have entered upon the latter part of the observation, *viz.* to shew that this is truly and properly justifying and saving faith. In speaking to which, I proposed to shew *six* things.

1. That justification in scripture signifies no more, but the pardon and remission of sins.

2. That faith can in no propriety of language, be said to be the instrument of our pardon. Thus far I have gone, and now proceed to what remains, *viz.* to shew,

3. That the influence which faith hath upon the pardon of sin, is this, that it is the whole and entire condition, required in the gospel, of our pardon, upon the performance of which God hath promised to pardon sin; which appears thus. All the conditions the gospel requires on our part in order to pardon, may be reduced to these *four* heads.

(1.) An

- (1.) An assent to the truth of the gospel.
- (2.) A trust and confidence in Christ as our only Saviour.
- (3.) Repentance from dead works.
- (4.) Sincere obedience and holiness of life.

But I have already proved at large, that all these are comprehended in the new testament notion of faith, which signifies the whole of christian religion. And that repentance and obedience are conditions of our pardon, and consequently of our justification, appears from these texts, *Acts* iii. 19. *Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* Doth not this imply that upon condition we do repent and be converted, God will pardon our sins? *1 John* i. 9. *If we confess our sins* (that is, with a resolution to leave them; as it is said elsewhere, *He that confesseth, and forsaketh his sins,*) *he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* *Mat.* vi. 14, 15. *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* And to the same purpose *Mat.* xviii. 35. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.* *Luke* vi. 37. *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.* *Luke* xi. 4. *And forgive us our sins: for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.* Where doth the scripture make any thing more plainly a condition of pardon, than it here does our forgiving of others? upon condition of the performance whereof he promises to forgive us; and without which he threatens not to forgive us. I know not what a condition is, if it be not that which if we perform we shall receive the benefit promised; if we do not, we shall fall short of it.

4. That the scripture where it speaks of justification by faith, speaks of this faith, and no other, of such a faith as takes in the whole of christian religion. The principal places where the scripture designedly treats of justification by faith, are the 3^d and 4th chapters of the epistle to the *Romans*; the 2^d and 3^d to the *Galatians*; and the 2^d of *St. James*. In the *Romans* and *Galatians*, *St Paul* doth plainly oppose faith to the law, and the righteousness of it to the works of the law: and it will clearly appear to any one that will carefully read over these discourses of *St. Paul's*, that by faith is meant the dispensation of the gospel, and by the law the Mosaical administration; and the result of all those discourses is, that men are not justified by performing the works which the legal dispensation required; but by assenting and submitting to the revelation of the gospel. And this is agreeable to what he says, *Acts* xiii. 38, 39. *Through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

It is true likewise, that the apostle, in the epistle to the *Romans*, doth not only dispute against those who simply contended for justification by the legal dispensation: but were fallen also into the gross error and mistake, that they did merit justification and pardon at God's hand; which is impossible: for pardon is free, and of grace, or else it is not pardon. Therefore the apostle asserts, that we are so justified by faith, that neither our assent to the gospel, nor our obedience to the commands of it, do merit this at God's hands; for this would directly contradict justification by the faith of the gospel. For how can any man possibly think, that he merits pardon by his believing and obeying the gospel, when this is part of the gospel which we believe, that Christ died for our sins, and purchased our pardon at so dear a rate; which had been very unjust, if we ourselves could have done any thing to have merited it.

And that faith is taken for the revelation of the gospel, in opposition to the legal administrations, will appear by considering these texts, *Gal.* iii. 23. *But before faith came, we were kept under the law;* by which the apostle plainly means this, that before the revelation of the gospel to the world, we were under the legal administration: for he adds afterwards, *We were shut up unto the faith that should afterward be revealed;* and what is the faith that should afterward be revealed, but the gospel? which in the fullness of time was to be revealed to the world, 'till which time we were held under the dispensation of the law: and ver 24. *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified*

by faith; that is, the law was a discipline preparatory for the gospel, that when that came, we might be justified by it: and ver. 25. *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster*, that is after the gospel was revealed, we were set free from the severe and harsh dispensation of the law; and our assent and submission to that revelation, is that whereby we are said to be justified, Rom. iii. 22. *Even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ*, that is, by the gospel, unto all, and upon all them that believe. And ver. 26. *That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*; τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ the justifier of him that yields assent and submission to the gospel of Christ. And this faith is said to be imputed to us for righteousness, Chap. iv. 24. *But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead*; that is, if we assent and submit to the revelation of the gospel, which God hath confirmed by that eminent miracle of raising up Christ from the dead.

St. James tells us most expressly, that the faith which justifies doth contain obedience in it: and if it do not, it is dead, and false, and ineffectual to all purposes of pardon and salvation: and that if any man pretend to faith, and that faith be destitute of the proper and genuine effects of true faith, it will be unprofitable to him, and not at all avail to his justification and salvation. The sum of his discourse is, that the faith which justifies and saves us, must not only be a bare assent of the understanding to the truths of the gospel: but must include in it obedience to all the commands of the gospel: and if it does not, it does no more deserve the name of faith, than good words to a man in want, deserve the name of charity. Chap. ii. ver. 14, 15, 16, 17. *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? can faith save him? If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.* And to this purpose he instanceth in Abraham and Rahab, and shews that the faith which justified them, did include in it the effects of faith, viz. obedience, and good works, ver. 21, 22. *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And ver. 23. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.* But if Abraham was justified by works, viz. by offering up his son upon the altar, in obedience to God's command, as he says before, at the 21st verse, how was the scripture fulfilled, which saith, that faith was imputed to him for righteousness, that is, he was justified by faith; unless faith take in the works of obedience? From whence he concludes, *that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*; not by a naked assent to the truth, but by such a faith as includes obedience; which he farther illustrates by a similitude at the last verse; *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* A living faith doth as truly contain obedience in it, as a living body contains a spirit.

And those distinctions which are commonly applied to this discourse of St. James do not clear it, but contradict the express design of it. Some say that *fides quæ est viva justificat; sed non qua viva*: faith which is living, justifies; but not as a living faith. Others say, (which is much to the same purpose) *fides justificat sine operibus; sed fides sine operibus non justificat*: faith justifies without works; but faith without works does not justify. But St. James says expressly, *that we are justified by works.* How then is that true, that *faith justifies without works*? And he says that works are the life of our faith. How then can any man say, that *though faith justifies, yet not as it is a living faith*; when we are justified by that which is the very life of our faith, and that is obedience?

There are two other distinctions whereby men endeavour to elude this plain text, which I did not mention before; *that faith justifies the person; and works justify the faith*, and that this is St. James his meaning. But what ground for this, when the text speaks expressly of the person being justified by works, as well as faith? *Was not Abraham our father justified by works?* ver. 21. *You see then that by works a man is justified: and not by faith only.* ver. 24. *Likewise also was not Ra-*
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hab the harlot justified by works? What colour is here for any man to say, that St. James doth not speak of the justification of the *person* by works; but of the *faith*? Or what necessity of framing this distinction, but only to serve an opinion? But at this rate a man may maintain any thing, though it be never so contrary to scripture, and elude the clearest text in the bible.

The other distinction which is much to the same sense, is, that the apostle doth not here speak of a real justification before God; but a declarative justification before men. But according to this, what sense can be made of *ver. 14. What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say, I have faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?* That is, according to this explication, can faith without works save him before men?

And this doth not contradict St. Paul, who saith, *Gal. ii. 16. that a man is not justified by the works of the law: but by the faith of Jesus Christ.* For how does this, that we are justified not by the legal dispensation, but by the faith of the gospel, which includes obedience and good works, contradict what St. James says, that we are not justified by a bare assent to the truth of the gospel, but by obedience to the commands of it? And I do not see that upon the contrary supposition, *viz.* that the faith of the gospel doth not include obedience in it, it is possible to reconcile these two apostles. Suppose this was St. Paul's meaning, that *we are justified by faith*, as the only condition and instrument, call it what they will, of our justification; but not by obedience or good works, as a condition of our justification; by what kind of comment can St. James his words be brought to this sense? What man would allow that those words at the 21st *ver. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar*, should be explained by this sense? Was not Abraham, when in obedience to God's command he had offered his son upon the altar, and upon this act of obedience was justified, was not he justified by faith only, and not by any work or act of obedience? Or that those words at the 24th *ver. Ye see then that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*, should be interpreted, Ye see then that by faith only a man is justified, and not by works? and unless they be thus interpreted, they are not to be reconciled with the sense of St. Paul's words, which many fasten upon them: but if St. Paul's words be taken in the most plain and obvious sense they are capable of, *viz.* that *we are not justified by the works of the law*, that is, by performing the works required by the legal dispensation; *but by the faith of Jesus Christ*, that is, by assenting and submitting to the revelation of the gospel; we do not strain St. James his words, to reconcile him with St. Paul.

And thus I have shewn, that where the scripture speaks of justification by faith, it speaks of this faith which I have described. I add, and of no other; not of a bare appropriation of the grace and mercy of the gospel; that is, in plain *English*, this is not justifying faith, to believe that I am pardoned, and justified, nor to have a firm assurance of this. For if we be justified by faith, we must believe before we can be justified; but if this be justifying faith to believe, or be assured we are justified, we must be justified before we believe; or else when we believe that we are justified, we must believe that which is not true. Nor is this justifying faith, to lay hold of the righteousness and merits of Christ for the pardon of our sins; that is, to trust and confide only in that, as the meritorious cause of our pardon. For tho' this be part of the notion of justifying faith, it is not all; tho' this be one of the terms or conditions upon which we are justified; yet it is not the whole and entire condition; which besides this takes in an assent to the whole gospel, repentance from dead works, and obedience to all the precepts of the gospel. And if any man can produce any one text which saith, that the faith which justifies, consists only in a trust and confidence in the merits of Christ, for the pardon of sin, or any thing to this effect, I will be most ready publickly to acknowledge my error: but if no body can do this, I shall beg their pardon, if I do continue still of the same mind I was.

I have now done with the *fourth* thing I propounded: but before I speak to the *two* heads which remain, I must remove an objection or two, that my former discourse may seem liable to.

Objection

Objection *first*, To make obedience a condition of pardon seems to take away the freeness of God's grace in pardoning sinners.

1. God's grace in pardoning a sinner is said to be free, not because it is not suspended upon any condition; for the scripture tells us plainly, that it is upon the condition of faith, and repentance, and forgiving others, and the like; but it is free, because God was pleased freely to give his Son to die for our sins, and to accept of his sacrifice for the expiation of them, and to impose easy and reasonable conditions upon us, in order to our enjoying of this benefit; and upon such conditions, though they have nothing of virtue or merit, of any natural or moral efficacy, to deserve, or procure such a benefit as the pardon of our sins, for the sake of his Son, whom he gave to be a ransom for us, to receive us to grace and mercy; and I think this abundantly enough to make our justification very gracious and free, though not absolutely free from all condition.

Our salvation is said in scripture to be as free as our justification: We are said to be saved by grace, as well as justified freely by his grace. But will any man say, that we are saved without any conditions, who reads these texts? *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. If ye walk after the flesh, ye shall die: but if through the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* So that he who can understand how we may be saved by grace, though our salvation be suspended upon the condition of faith, repentance, and holiness, and obedience of life, may, if he please, understand how we may be justified freely by God's grace, though it be upon the same conditions. So that if men were not monstrously perverse, it is impossible, that they should not see the weakness of this objection.

Objection the *second*, this is the doctrine of the Papists, that obedience and good works are a condition of our justification.

Ans. 1. I am for the doctrine which is evidently contained in scripture, whoever hold it. A man ought not to be frightened out of the truth by any name.

2. But there is a wide difference between the doctrine of the Papists about justification, and this doctrine. They say, that obedience and good works are not only a condition of our justification, but a meritorious cause of it; which I abhor as much as any one. It is the doctrine of *merit* that the Protestants chiefly oppose in the matter of justification; and if some also oppose the Papists about good works being a condition, I know no body that thinks himself obliged to hold every opinion that any Protestant hath maintained against the Papists: and the like I say to the objection of *Jocinianism* and *arminianism*, and a hundred names more, if people think fit to fasten them upon it.

And now I might compare this doctrine with the contrary. All that may be said against it is, that it diminisheth the grace of God: but that I have shewn it doth not: but then it hath these advantages. It is so far as I can judge, (and mine own judgment must govern me) much more plainly contained in scripture, and it is a doctrine more according to godliness; it tends more to quicken men to obedience and a holy life, to believe that they cannot have their sins otherwise pardoned, than to believe that they may have their sins pardoned without obedience and a holy life; and if obedience be not a necessary condition of pardon, it is plain that men may be pardoned without it. For example, if a man promise me a thousand pounds, only upon this condition, that I will believe him and trust him, but without any condition of doing what he shall command me, and he shall declare thus much to me; if I can trust this man's word, I need not doubt but I shall have the sum promised; though I should disobey him in every thing that he commanded me to do: this is just the case; and if it be, it is no wonder that men are so loath to disbelieve this pleasant opinion, which gives men comfortable hopes of the pardon of their sins, upon such easy terms. Not that I am so uncharitable as not to acknowledge that our worthy and excellent divines, who have been of this judgment, have always press'd the necessity of holiness and obedience: but I am sorry they could not do it with so good advantage, according to their principles, the natural consequences of them tending to licentiousness, and a neglect of the precepts

precepts of the gospel; to which purpose they have been sadly abused by several libertines in these and former times, ever since *Luther's* days, and I could never yet see how *antinomianism* could solidly be confuted upon those principles.

5. That no metaphorical descriptions of justifying faith are allowable any farther than as they serve to illustrate the plain and proper, and simple notion of faith. My meaning is, he that would teach men what faith is, he must first acquaint men with the thing, and describe it in as proper and simple words as can be, and not by figurative and metaphorical phrases. Indeed after a man hath delivered the simple notion of a thing in proper words, he may afterwards illustrate it by metaphors: but then these are not to be insisted upon, and strained to the utmost extent of the metaphor, beyond what the true notion of the thing will bear: for if consequences once come to be drawn from metaphors, and doctrines founded, and theories built upon them, instead of illustrating the thing, they blind and obscure it, and serve to no other purpose, but to seduce and mislead the understandings of men, and to multiply controversies without end; and (as I told you before) I do the rather take notice of this abuse of metaphors upon this subject, because I do not know any other head of divinity which hath suffered so much by them, as the doctrine of justifying faith, whereby the plain truth hath been very much darkened, and occasion ministred to many endless disputes. But this will best appear by some particular instances. Justifying faith hath usually been described by these metaphors, *resting*, and *relying*, and *leaning* upon Christ, *apprehending* and *laying hold*, and *applying* of Christ, *receiving* of Christ, and *coming to him*. Now concerning these, I shall briefly speak these *three* or *four* things.

(1.) That none of these metaphors, except the two last, *receiving of Christ*, and *coming to him*, are any where used in scripture, to describe justifying faith by; and therefore there is no reason why they should be so much used and insisted on. Let any man shew me where justifying faith is any where in scripture described by *resting* and *relying*, and *leaning* upon Christ, by *apprehending* and *laying hold*, and *applying* of him.

(2.) If these metaphors were explained and turned into proper and plain words, they can signify nothing else, but that faith which I have been all this while describing. For what can any man understand by *resting*, and *relying*, and *leaning* upon Christ, but to trust in him, as the author of our eternal salvation, under which word all the benefits which Christ hath purchased for us are comprehended? Now can any man be said to trust in Christ, as the author of his salvation, otherwise than by assenting to the truth of the gospel, and complying with the terms and conditions of it? And what can any man understand by *apprehending*, and *laying hold* on, and *applying* Christ, other than this, to make use of him for all those ends and purposes for which God hath appointed him? And what those are the scripture tells us; that *he is made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption*.

(3.) As for those scripture-metaphors of *receiving* Christ, and *coming to him*, the scripture useth them but sparingly, and I dare say, for once that it useth these metaphors, it doth twenty times describe faith by plain and proper words; and where it doth make use of these metaphors, it doth sufficiently explain them. So you find *coming to Christ* is explained by *learning of him*, *Matth. xi. 28, 29. Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* That is, come to me as scholars and disciples to be taught by me; in order to which it is requisite we should believe him. *Oportet discentem credere, he that will learn, must believe him that teacheth him*, and trust his skill. And so for *receiving* him, lest the metaphor should seduce men, St. *John* had no sooner used it, but he tells what he means by it. *John i. 12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; that is, believed him to be the person promised to be the Messiah, and Saviour of the world; as appears by the opposition in the verse before, He came to his own, and his own received him not; that is, rejected him, did not own him to be the true Messiah.* But now if we will strain such a metaphor as this, beyond the intention of it, and because *believing* is called a *receiving* of Christ, and we receive things

things with the hand, and the hand is an instrument, will from hence infer, that faith is an instrument of our justification; what may not men make of the scripture at this rate?

(4.) I will add this concerning scripture metaphors in general, that where the scripture useth metaphors which were very familiar in those languages in which the scripture was writ, and well understood by those who spoke that language, but are very obscure and uncouth to us, and not at all used in our language, as most of the scripture-metaphors are, the proper work of a minister is not to insist in such cases upon scripture-metaphors, to darken his discourse by them, but to explain them, and make them intelligible, to translate them into *English*, and instead of them, to use such phrases, as people are more familiarly acquainted with, and are used in our own language. For a man may be a *Barbarian* that speaks to people in *unknown phrases* and metaphors, as well as *he that speaks in an unknown tongue*; and the very same reason that obligeth us to put the scripture into a known language, doth oblige men to explain the doctrines contained in it by such phrases and metaphors as are known and used in that language.

6. That if this plain and simple notion of justifying faith were admitted, it would supercede all those controversies about justification, which have so much troubled the reformed churches. Those who have been curious to enquire into these matters, have reckoned up at least twenty several opinions among the protestants concerning justifying faith. I do not desire to acquaint myself with those differences; he that would know what justification and justifying faith are, shall sooner come to understand the nature of them, by diligent reading of the scriptures, than by reading over all the controversial writings of divines about them; and if men would but content themselves with those plain and simple descriptions, which the scripture gives us of faith, there could not be any great difference about it; this would cut off most of those disputes which have been commenced upon metaphors, and figurative speeches. And here I had thought to have descended to a particular consideration of the controversies about justifying faith, but I am weary of the work; and therefore shall only make some brief reflections upon this whole discourse, and then apply it to our own use; but this, God willing, the next opportunity.

S E R M O N CLXXIV.

The Condition of the Gospel-Covenant, and the
Merit of Christ, consistent.

JOHN xx. 31.

But these are written that, ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The fourth Sermon on this Text. I HAVE in my former discourses on these words treated largely of the nature of christian faith, particularly as it sanctifies, justifies, and saves men. All that I farther propose is, to make some reflections upon this whole discourse, particularly that which relates to justifying faith, and then apply all to our own use.

I have

I have already taken notice of *two* objections, to which my discourse may seem liable; and if there yet remain any prejudice upon any man's spirit against this doctrine, I would desire such calmly to consider it, and the agreeableness of it, not to the opinions of men, but to the word of God, and the suitableness of it to the great design of christian religion, every where expressed in the gospel, which is to bring men to holiness and obedience. And what argument and consideration can be more powerful to take men off from sin, and to excite them to the practice of holiness, than this, that repentance and obedience are an indispensable condition of our justification and pardon? And this is the very point in difference, whether the gospel do not make repentance and obedience the conditions of our pardon and justification, as well as an assent to the truth of the gospel, and a trust in Christ as the meritorious cause of our salvation. That they are, I have endeavoured to prove from scripture; and for the farther clearing of it, I desire that the nature of the gospel covenant may be well considered, which I take to be this. On God's part there are certain benefits promised, justification and pardon of sin, and eternal life and salvation. On our part there are certain conditions required before we can be made partakers of those benefits; these are, to assent to the truth of the gospel, trusting in Christ as our only Saviour, repentance from dead works, and a sincere purpose and resolution of obedience, and a holy life; these make up the whole and entire condition of the gospel, and are often expressed by this one word, *faith*, which signifies the whole duty of a christian; because he that truly believes the gospel, will do whatever the gospel requires. And hence it is, that to be a christian, and to be a believer, are in the phrase of the new testament all one. Now the matter in controversy is plainly this; whether this whole condition be required of us in order to our pardon and justification, as well as in order to our salvation. That repentance, and obedience, and holiness of life, are conditions of our salvation, I think is universally agreed; I am sure it is clearly expressed in these two texts, *Christ is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him*, Heb. v. 9. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. And that the conditions of our justification and salvation are the same, I think is every whit as clear both from scripture, and from the general acknowledgment of divines by necessary consequence. From scripture, St. James says, that the same thing that justifies us, saves us: for when he disputes, whether we are justified by faith only, or by faith and works, he hath this expression, *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say, he hath faith, and have not works; can faith save him?* From whence the inference is plain, that upon the very same condition that we are justified, we are saved. And it is evident by necessary consequence from the general acknowledgment of divines; for I think this is universally agreed by divines, that whatever puts a man into a state of justification and pardon, puts a man into a state of salvation; and if this be true, it necessarily follows, that the conditions of our justification and salvation are the same: and if assent to the truth of the gospel, and trust in Christ as our only Saviour, be the only conditions of our justification, then they are the only conditions of our salvation; and repentance and obedience are not conditions of our salvation: but if they be conditions of our salvation, then they are of our justification. And I will be bold to say, that this hath as much of demonstration in it, as any thing in divinity is capable of; and I wonder extremely how any man, that considers the nature of the gospel covenant, can imagine that we should be made partakers of any blessing or benefit promised in the covenant, without performing the whole condition of the covenant.

And now if any man ask, *Cui bono?* To what end is all this? Suppose it be true, to what purpose is it to awaken differences, and stir up controversies about these matters? In order to these *two* ends, which I take to be very considerable.

1. That we may be able to answer the *Papists*, who charge us with *solifidianism*: as if we were of this opinion, that if a man do but trust in Christ, that is, be but confidently persuaded that he will save him, and pardon him, this is sufficient, and consequently, he that is thus persuaded, need not take any farther care of his salvation, but may live as he list: and I do not see how this can be avoided;

especially if this be true, which our divines universally assert, that whatever puts a man into a justified state, puts him into a state of salvation; I say, I do not see how this charge can be avoided, unless we own holiness and obedience to be conditions of our justification, as well as trust in Christ. I know no other middle way between *popery* and *antinomianism*. But,

2. Which is more considerable, Without this we can give no satisfactory and reasonable account of our religion to a heathen. Suppose a heathen should say thus; your religion gives a very good account of the corruption and sinfulness of mankind, and hath provided a very probable remedy for the expiation of it, by the death of the Son of God: but this seems to me very unreasonable, and to contradict the most natural notions, that we have of God's justice and holiness, that he should pardon men, as you say he does, though they do not repent of their sins, nor are resolved to leave them, nay, though they be resolved to go on in a wicked course. Did ever any wise prince pardon a traitor upon these terms? but whoever says that repentance and a sincere purpose and resolution of obedience are not the condition of our pardon, says, that God will pardon men without repentance, though they are not at all sorry for what they have done, nor resolved to change their course: for that is a condition without which a thing cannot be; and if repentance be not a condition of pardon, a man may be pardoned without it. And if this be true, christianity is the most lewd and senseless doctrine in the world. For what can be a greater encouragement to sin than this, to tell men that they may be pardoned without repentance? That is, though they live in sin, and continue so to do. *Paganism* never taught any such thing. Nay, they may add farther, that this which you teach as the doctrine of your religion, seems expressly contrary to your own books, which you say contain your religion. Does not the bible say, that *he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy*? And doth not this plainly imply, that repentance is a condition of pardon? *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Doth it not say, that *if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly father forgive you*? Can any words more plainly express a condition than these do? How should we be able to defend our religion against such an assault, unless we disclaim this charge, and tell them plainly, and without a distinction, that our religion teacheth that repentance, and resolution of holiness, and obedience, are conditions of our pardon and justification? I would to God men would consult the honour of christianity, and when they hold any opinion, they would not consider the interest of a party, but the universal concernment of the christian religion. If we had to deal with subtle heathens, as the primitive fathers of the church had, we should see a necessity of laying aside such unreasonable opinions. I would fain have any man shew any one clear passage out of any of the ancient fathers and writers concerning christian religion, which says, that trust in Christ for salvation is the only condition of our justification, and that repentance and obedience are not; or that explains justification by faith alone, in this sense. I know it is usually said, the ancient fathers and christians were ignorant of the doctrine of justification in a great measure, and knew very little of the mystery of the gospel. I know not what they mean by *mystery*: but I am sure they defined christian religion better, and gave a more reasonable and satisfactory account of it, than any of those do, who are so apt to slight them.

The use of this doctrine is as follows.

First, To persuade men to place all their hope and confidence of salvation in *Jesus Christ* the Son of God; that is, to believe that through the alone merit of his death and sufferings, God is reconciled to us, and that only upon the account of the satisfaction which he hath made to divine justice, we are restored to the favour of God, and our sins are pardoned to us, and we have a title to eternal life. Not but that there are conditions required on our part, to make us capable of these benefits, faith and repentance, and sincere obedience and holiness of life, without which we shall never be made partakers of them: but that the satisfaction of Christ is the only meritorious cause of these blessings. And to persuade
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men to the belief of this, I shall endeavour to satisfy them of these two things.

I. That Christ hath properly merited these blessings for us.

II. That he only hath done it. The *first* of these propositions is directly levelled against the Socinians: the *second* against the Papists. I shall speak but briefly of them.

I. That Christ hath properly merited these blessings for us: and this being purely matter of revelation, we are to rely upon scripture only for the proof of it. Matt. xx. 28. *The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*, λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν, *a price of redemption, instead of that which should have been paid by us.* John vi. 51. *And the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* John x. 11. *Christ is called the good shepherd that lays down his life for his sheep.* John xv. 12, 13. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* Matth. xxvi. 28. *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.* Rom. v. 6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* 1 Cor. xv. 3. *For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. *For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge; that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.* Eph. i. 7. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.* Col. i. 20, 21, 22. *And (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight.* 1 Thess. v. 9, 10. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath: but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us.* Heb. ii. 9. *That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.* Heb. ix. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. *But Christ being come an High-Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the new testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. And ver. 25, 26, 27, 28. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others: (For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation. Heb. x. 11, 12. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Pet. ii. 21, 24. Because Christ also suffered for us; who his own self bare our sins, in his own body, on the tree. 1 Pet. iii. 18. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. 1 John ii. 1, 2. My little*

children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John iii. 16. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 1 John iv. 10. Herein is love, not that we loved God; but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Rev. i. 5. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins by his own blood. Rev. v. 9. Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. From these and many other texts, it seems to be very plain and evident, that Christ died for our sins, and suffered in our stead, and by the sacrifice of himself has made an atonement for us, and reconciled us to God, and hath paid a price and ransom for us, and by the merit of his death hath purchased for us forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified. And I do not know any doctrine of our religion, that is founded and established upon more and plainer texts, which cannot be understood in any other sense, without offering great violence to the first and most obvious meaning of them.

I know the Socinians have framed evasions to all these texts. which I have not time now to produce and examine; nor would it be worth the while. I shall only say this to them in general; that there is no principle of religion so plainly laid down in the whole scripture, but may be overthrown by the same or the like evasions. Suppose Christ had died in our stead, and made satisfaction for sin, and God had intended to declare so much to us; in what plainer and more express and proper words could he have done it, than the scripture hath already done? If God had said in the scripture expressly that *Christ had died in our place and stead*, and had *satisfied for our sins*; these very expressions, by the same arts of interpretation, might have been strained and wrested to some other sense. So that if God did not intend to express to us by these texts, that *Christ satisfied for the sins of men*; yet they are so obvious to be interpreted to that sense, and so hardly, if at all, capable of any other, that we cannot imagine, without a great reflection upon the wisdom of God, that he should deliver his mind to men in words and expressions so exceedingly liable to a quite different sense from what he intended. Besides that there is nothing more unreasonable than to deny that to be the meaning of scripture, which if it had been the meaning could not have been expressed in plainer and more advantageous words; especially when this is done, not in one or two texts, but very many; and not by one form of expression, but several, and all inclining to the same sense; and which is worst of all, this violence is offered to scripture in a matter which does neither contradict other texts, nor the reason of mankind, viz. That one man should suffer in another's stead, and make satisfaction for the crimes and faults which another hath committed; supposing the party offended be willing to accept of the commutation, and the party that suffers in another's stead do voluntarily do it.

II. That Christ only hath merited these blessings for us, and that he had no partner with him in this; or there is no other hath merited these blessings for us, nor can we ourselves merit them.

1. No other hath merited these blessings for us. Not to take notice of what the *Papists* say, of the meritoriousness of our works of *supererogation*, which go into the treasury of the church, and make up a publick stock of merit, to be disposed and dealt out by the *Pope* at his discretion; they have by a most unparallel'd blasphemy joined the virgin *Mary* with Christ in the work of our redemption; and some of them have been so impiously bold, as to parallel the virtue of her milk with the efficacy of Christ's blood. And though Christ say, *that he trod the wine-press of his father's wrath alone, and of the people there was none with him*; yet *Bonaventure* in his meditations ventures to corrupt the text by this foolish gloss, *Nullus erat tecum. Recte, Domine, sed erat tecum femina*; Right, Lord, there was no man with thee, but there was a woman, viz. thy mother.

2. Nor can we ourselves do any thing whereby we can merit these blessings at God's hand. Considering that we received our being, and all that we are and have

have from God, and upon account of these benefits are obliged to love him and serve him to the utmost; what a senseless piece of arrogance is it to say, that a creature can merit any thing at God's hand? Whatever we give God is of his own, and when we have done all we can, we have done no more than our duty. And can any man challenge a reward for doing what he ought to do? Can any man make satisfaction for a fault that he hath committed, by doing his duty, that is, by not committing another? It is a sure rule, *debitum debito non solvitur*. We are indebted to God by the breach of his law: but we cannot quit this debt, and satisfy for this breach, by not breaking it again, because we owe to God all possible obedience.

Besides that all our obedience is imperfect, and is so far from meriting, that it stands in need of pardon; and can a man demerit and merit by the same action? Can he who deserves to be punished for an action, because he did it no better, deserve to be rewarded for the same action, because he did it so well? And to say that Christ hath merited that our imperfect obedience should merit, either signifies only this, that Christ hath merited that our imperfect obedience should be accepted by God, notwithstanding its imperfection; (and this is true, but nothing to the purpose of merit) or else it signifies, that Christ hath merited that *that* which is no wise meritorious, should be so; that is, that the nature of things should be altered; which is not only false, but senseless.

Secondly, To persuade us to live as we believe. If we profess to believe the gospel to be true, then let our hearts and lives be suitable to those truths which we believe. If we believe *Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God*, we believe the doctrine which he delivered to the world to be from God, and consequently to be true; we believe the precepts of it are holy, and just, and good, and that they are necessary to be observed by us, as being in order to our peace and happiness; we believe that the promises of the gospel are *all yea, and amen*, and shall every tittle of them be made good; we believe that the threatnings of the gospel shall all punctually be fulfilled. Now how ought men to live, that believe all this? Having a law given us which hath the sanction of such promises and threatnings, ought we not to conform our lives to it; and charge ourselves with obedience to all those precepts of piety towards God, and purity and temperance in the government of ourselves, and justice and righteousness in our dealings with others, which are contained in this new law of the gospel? If the gospel hath promised eternal life and happiness to those who do conscientiously abstain from sin, and follow holiness; *having these promises*, ought we not to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*? If the gospel hath threatened, that at the end of the world, Christ will *come in flaming fire, &c.* If we believe these things shall be, *what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness*?

I have formerly shewed at large, how unbecoming it is for any man that professeth himself a christian, to live unsuitable to his profession, that it is the greatest disparagement to the gospel, and the highest reflection upon it that can be; and that it is infinitely dangerous to us; and though these be very proper considerations, yet because I have formerly urged them, I shall not now enforce my exhortation with these arguments; but shall mention *two* other considerations, and so conclude.

First, If our lives be not answerable to our belief, our faith will be ineffectual to all intents and purposes.

Secondly, A life unsuitable to our belief, is the high-way to infidelity and atheism.

First, If our lives be not answerable to our belief, our faith will be ineffectual to all real intents and purposes.

1. It will be ineffectual to give us the reputation of christians among wise and discerning persons. We profess to believe the gospel; but if we live contrary to it, our profession is *protestatio contra factum*, and therefore not credible; because our actions contradict it. The constant tenour of a man's actions is a more credible and emphatical declaration of the inward sense of his heart, and shews better what the man believes, than the most solemn profession in words. When our words are
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not confirmed by our actions, they are but an empty sound, and signify nothing. I may allude to that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. *Though a man have all faith, yet if he be destitute of the true effect of faith, charity, he is but as a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.* St. James doth very well set forth the inefficacy of such a faith, by this similitude, James ii. 15, 16, 17. *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit? even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead.* Men are not so easily cozened as we think they are. Discerning men will not be imposed upon, and put off with a formal and empty profession of faith, when there is nothing in our lives to answer it. It is not standing up in the church, and professing that we believe in God, and in Jesus Christ, that he was born, and died, and rose again, and at the end of the world will come to judge the quick and the dead, that will persuade men that we are christians. Men will look into our lives, and examine our actions, and enquire into our conversations: by these they will judge of the truth and reality of our profession. Let us not delude ourselves, and think to pass for christians upon these terms, among any that know how to make a true judgment of things. We may cozen ourselves; but we cannot cheat others, who are not so partial to us, as we are apt to be to ourselves. It is not our winking, that hinders others from seeing us.

Nay, I go farther, it is not an earnest contending for fundamental articles of our christian faith, if we live contrary to them, that will satisfy any wise man that we believe them; much less an intemperate zeal for indifferent opinions in religion. Such were the doctrines concerning the necessity on the one hand, and the unlawfulness of circumcision on the other; but the assent to the one opinion or the other in these matters, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love, the new creature, the keeping of the commandments of God,* as the apostle in several places expresseth it. Men stand much upon the title of *orthodox*, by which is usually understood, not believing the doctrine of Christ or his apostles, but such opinions as are in vogue among such a party, such systems of divinity as have been compiled in haste by those whom we have in admiration; and whatever is not consonant to these little bodies of divinity, though possibly it agree well enough with the word of God, is error and heresy; and whoever maintains it, can hardly pass for a christian among some angry and perverse people. I do not intend to plead for any error; but I would not have christianity chiefly measured by matters of opinion. I know no such error and heresy as a wicked life. That man believes the gospel best, who lives most according to it. Though no man can have a worse opinion of the *Socinian* doctrine than I have, yet I had rather a man should deny the satisfaction of Christ, than believe it, and abuse it to the encouragement of sin. Of the two I have more hopes of him that denies the divinity of Christ, and lives otherwise soberly, and righteously, and godly in the world, than of the man who owns Christ to be the Son of God, and lives like a child of the Devil.

2. Such a faith as hath not an answerable life, will be ineffectual to the purpose of justification and salvation. St. James tells us, it is *a dead faith, and profits nothing*, that no man is justified by it, nor will it save any man. *Christ is the author of eternal salvation to them who so believe his doctrine as to obey it; he will come in flaming fire, to render vengeance not only to them that do not believe, but to them that do not obey the gospel.* It will not be sufficient at the day of judgment, to plead our profession of faith in Christ, and to say, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out Devils, and in thy name have done many wondrous works?* Doing all this in Christ's name, implies that they profess to believe in him: but notwithstanding all this, if they be *workers of iniquity*, Christ will say to such, *Depart from me, I know you not.* If our Saviour makes a true and proper representation of the day of judgment, and the proceedings of it, Matt. xxv. men's faith shall then be tried by the real fruits and effects of it; then the enquiry shall be, how men have lived? what good they have done, or omitted and neglected? and accordingly

ingly sentence will be past upon them. Nay, such a faith is so far from saving, that it will be an aggravation of our condemnation, and sink us the deeper into Hell. *There is one that condemneth you, even Jesus in whom ye trust.*

Secondly, A life unsuitable to our belief is the high-way to infidelity and atheism, to bring others and ourselves to it.

1. To bring others to infidelity and atheism, and to confirm them in it. What can be a more effectual bar to keep *Heathens*, and *Jews*, and *Turks*, from entertaining the gospel? What can be a greater confirmation of them in their infidelity, than so to mis-represent christian religion to them, as we do by our unsuitable lives? What can be a stronger prejudice against it, to men who do not look narrowly into it, but only see it at a distance, than to see what fruit it produces in the lives of christians? May they not invert that proverbial speech of our Saviour's, *Does a vine send forth thorns?* If christianity were such a holy institution, how comes it to pass that christians are so wicked? If *Jesus Christ* were so excellent a master, we should see it in his scholars; *si Christus sancta docuisset, christiani sancte vixissent*, as *Salvian* speaks. And it is the way to bring men to atheism. What more likely to take a man off from all religion, than to see the religion which pretends to be the best in the world, represented by the lives of christians at such a disadvantage, as if it were a barren and fruitless, and ineffectual thing, and as if they who profess it, did believe it to be a lie, and gave no credit at all to the doctrines of it?

2. It is the way to bring ourselves to infidelity and atheism. As an erroneous judgment and understanding hath usually an evil influence upon mens lives, so much more a vicious and corrupt life hath a bad influence upon mens understandings. It is so uneasy a thing for men to act contrary to their reason, and against the dictates of their understandings, that men for their own quiet, and in their own defence, will bend their judgments, and make them comply with the interest of their lusts. Mens affections, which way soever they incline, set a byass upon their understandings; and this doth not only proceed from the nature of the thing, but from the just judgment of God, *2 Theff. ii. 10; 11, 12.* the apostle tells us, *that those who receive not the truth in the love of it, that they may be saved; God will send them strong delusions, to believe lies; that they all may be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.* If men once have pleasure in unrighteousness, it will not be long before they give over believing the truth, because God by his just judgment will give them over to themselves, to follow the byass of their own corrupt hearts, which inclines them to believe lies. Of all persons in the world, a wicked and unholy christian is most likely to turn a speculative infidel and atheist; and none so likely to fall into this gross darkness, as those who resist and quench so great a light as that of the gospel is, which they profess to believe.

S E R M O N C L X X V.

Of the Miracles wrought in Confirmation of Christianity.

H E B. ii. 4.

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.

WHOEVER impartially considers the christian religion, cannot but acknowledge the laws and precepts of it to be so reasonable; and the practice of them so evidently to tend not only to the happiness of particular persons, but
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to the peace and welfare of the world; and the promises and threatnings of the gospel, which are the great motives to persuade men to the obedience of those laws, to be so agreeable to the natural hopes and fears which mankind were always possessed withal; that upon this consideration, it might justly be expected, that the doctrine of christianity, upon the first publication of it, should have been entertained with a readiness of mind proportionable to the reasonableness of it.

Or if the bare reasonableness of it be not thought inducement enough, we may easily imagine, how God, if he had pleased, could upon the first appearance of this religion in the world, have given it such advantages, as would mightily have contributed to the more easy reception and entertainment of it. He could have ordered things so, that our blessed Saviour, the author of this doctrine, should have been, as the *Jews* expected, a great temporal monarch; he could have raised him to that dignity, and have armed him with that authority, as must have given him a mighty power and influence over mankind, and would have gained the great, and the wise, and the learned, to have been active instruments in the propagating of this religion, and in persuading men to the embracing of it.

But he, *whose ways are above our ways, and whose thoughts are above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth*, did not think fit to have it promoted and carried on this way; nay, he seems on purpose to have stripped it of all secular advantages, that it might be perfectly free from all suspicion of a worldly interest, and design, and that it might be evident to all the world, that it was *a plant which his own right hand had planted*; and that it did not owe its establishment to the authority, and wisdom, and contrivance of men, but to the power of God, and to the immediate favour and contrivance of heaven.

And now being thus destitute of all worldly assistance, though never so reasonable in itself, it was not likely that it should be able with success to grapple with the lusts and corruptions of men, to which it was so directly opposite; nor with the strong prejudices of their education in a contrary religion, which are always hard to be overcome; nor with the temporal interests of men, which were all at that time to be renounced and quitted for its sake; unless it had some other advantages to make way for it, and to recommend it to the minds of men. For having no secular baits and allurements to tempt men to the profession of it; no earthly contrivance and assistance to support it and bear it out, but on the contrary, the most violent and powerful opposition raised against it; it was necessary that those who offered it to the world, should be able to give credit to it some other way, and to produce very sensible and convincing arguments of another kind: otherwise they might have despaired of ever conquering the prejudices of men against it, and of persuading them to embrace that religion, which was so apparently contrary both to their inclinations and interests.

So that in these circumstances, in order to the full conviction of men, that those who published this doctrine to them came from God, and were commissioned and sent by him to teach the world, it was very fitting, that God himself should give some remarkable testimony to the first preachers of it; and this the text tells us he did, *by bearing witness to them, with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*.

For the better understanding of these words, we shall do well to reflect upon the design of this epistle, which was to establish the *Jews*, who had but newly embraced christianity, in the steadfast belief and profession of it, notwithstanding the troubles and persecutions which attended it: and to this end the apostle represents to them that the gospel was delivered with more authority, and had a greater confirmation given to it, than the law. The law was delivered by *angels*; but the gospel by the *Son of God*: and if the contempt of the law was so severely punished, what might they expect would be the fate of those who should slight and reject the gospel? *If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward: how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? God also bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.*

will. *Συνεπιμαρτυροῦντες τῷ θεῷ*, God adjoining this farther testimony of signs and wonders. The apostles testified what they had heard from our Lord; and to give credit and confirmation to their testimony, God was pleased to endow them with miraculous gifts; *he bare them witness with signs, and wonders, and miracles.* So likewise, *Acts* xiv. 3. it is said, that God gave testimony to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by the apostles. Sometimes there are more words put together, to express the giving of this miraculous power, *Acts* ii. 22. Jesus of Nazareth approved of God by miracles, and wonders, and signs. *2 Cor.* xii. 12. St. Paul speaking of himself says, *The signs of an apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and miracles.* These were the marks of an extraordinary and immediate commission, such as was that of the apostles.

It is to no purpose nicely to enquire into the difference of these words *σημεῖα τέρατα δυνάμεις*; signs, wonders, and miracles, because in all probability there is no difference intended, it being the manner of the Hebrews, when they would express a great thing, or a great degree of any thing, to heap several words together, signifying the same thing. So we find. *Deut.* vi. 5. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*, that is, greatly, with very ardent and intense degree of affection. So likewise in the text, God is said to bear witness to the apostles, with signs, and wonders, and miracles, that is, in a very eminent and extraordinary manner, by great and wonderful miracles.

From these words three things offer themselves to our consideration.

First, That miracles are a divine testimony given to a person or doctrine. God bearing them testimony, by signs, and wonders, and miracles.

Secondly, That God gave this testimony to the apostles and first preachers of christianity, in a very eminent manner: for so the phrase signifies, so many words being multiplied to express the greatness of the thing.

Thirdly, We will consider the reason why miracles are now ceased in the church, and have been for several ages, so that there have been no footsteps of them for a long time.

First, That miracles are a divine testimony given to a person or doctrine. God is here said to bear witness to the apostles, with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles; that is, the miracles which God enabled them to work, were an evidence that their doctrine was from God.

And because there is some difficulty in this argument, therefore, that we may the more distinctly understand of what force this argument or testimony of miracles is, to prove the divinity of any person or doctrine, it will be requisite clearly to state these two things.

I. What a miracle is.

II. In what circumstances, and with what limitations, miracles are a sufficient testimony to the truth and divinity of any doctrine. The clearing of these two things shall be my work at this time.

I. What a miracle is. The shortest and plainest description I can give of it, is this, that it is a supernatural effect, evident and wonderful to sense. So that there are two things necessary to a miracle.

1. That it be a supernatural effect.

2. That it be evident and wonderful to sense.

1. That it be a supernatural effect. By a supernatural effect, I mean such an effect, as either in itself, and in its own nature, or in the manner and circumstances of it, exceeds any natural power that we know of to produce it. For there are some things that are miraculous in themselves; others that are only miraculous in the manner and circumstances of their operation. For instance, the resurrection of one from the dead, is a thing which in itself is supernatural, and an effect above any power that we know of in nature to produce; but the healing of several diseases, and the speaking of languages, are not things which are in themselves, and in their nature supernatural: for we see that they may be acquired by natural skill and industry: but to heal all sorts of diseases, in an instant, and by a word, and without the application of natural means; and on a sudden to speak languages

which a man never learned; these are things, which though they be not in their nature, yet in such circumstances as these, they are supernatural.

I say, that a supernatural effect, is that which is above any natural power that we know of to produce; by which I do not mean, that miracles are always an immediate effect of the divine power, and consequently that God alone can work them. For angels good or bad, may do such things, as exceed any natural power known to us, and such as we cannot distinguish by any certain marks and characters from those effects which are wrought by the immediate power of God; and if we cannot distinguish them, they are equally miracles to us. When the angel slew 185000 in the camp of the *Assyrians* in one night, this ought in all reason to be reckoned a miracle; and yet this, though done by the command of God, an angel might do by his own power and strength; for *they excel in strength*: but what limitations to set to their power, we cannot tell, only it is finite; so that excepting those things, which the scripture hath peculiarly appropriated to God, we cannot say what it is that an angel cannot do.

The same may be said concerning evil angels. The Devil may work wonders, or assist his instruments to work them. So *Pharaoh's* magicians wrought several miracles by the power of the Devil, and did some of the very same things that *Moses* and *Aaron* did, either really or in appearance, and it is all one whether. For he who to mens senses turns a rod into a serpent, works as great a miracle to me, as he who really does it; and if I am not to believe a thing to be a miracle, when to my senses it appears to be wrought, I am never to believe any, unless I could make some difference between those miracles which are real, and those that only appear to be wrought; for if we know not how to distinguish them, they are to us all one as if they were real: but if they may be distinguished, then there will be need of another miracle, to shew which are real and which not: and the same question and doubt will arise about that miracle, and so without end.

So that I do not see what is gained by saying, that *Pharaoh's* magicians did only delude mens senses, but did not turn their rods really into serpents, as *Aaron* did his; because this may be said on one side, as well as on the other: for to the standers-by there was no difference, but the one seemed to the senses of the beholders to be as real as the other; and the text makes no difference, but says, *The magicians did in like manner; for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents*, only *Aaron's* had this advantage, that *his rod swallowed up their rods*: but the main difference was here, *Moses* and *Aaron* wrought such miracles, as the magicians could not work, neither really, nor in appearance: for when *Aaron* by smiting the dust with his rod, had turned it into lice, it is said that the magicians attempted to do so with their enchantments, but could not, and then they yielded and acknowledged that it was *the finger of God*. And if they had not been thus plainly overcome, but could to all appearance of sense, have done all those things which *Moses* and *Aaron* did, it might justly have been disputed which had been the true prophets.

So that the Devil and his instruments may work miracles. *Moses* plainly supposeth that a false prophet, who comes to seduce the people to idolatry, may work a true sign or wonder. *Deut. xiii. 1, 2. If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder; and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other Gods. And our blessed Saviour expressly foretells, Matth. xxiv. That false Christs and false prophets shall arise after his death, and shew great signs and wonders.*

From all which it is evident, that it is not of the essence of a miracle, (as many have thought) that it be an immediate effect of the divine power. It is sufficient, that it exceed any natural power, that we know of to produce it. And if such effects be not to be esteemed miracles, a miracle would signify nothing; because no man could know when it is wrought, nor distinguish it from those effects which appear to be miraculous, but are not. This is the first property or condition of a miracle, that it be supernatural, that is, such an effect as exceeds any natural power that we know of to produce it. But then,

2. There is another condition also required to a miracle, that it be an effect evident and wonderful to sense: for if we do not see it, it is to us, as if it were not, and can be no testimony or proof of any thing, because itself stands in need of another miracle to give testimony to it, and to prove that it was wrought; and neither in scripture, nor profane authors, nor in common use of speech, is any thing called a miracle, but what falls under the notice of our senses; a miracle being nothing else but a thing wonderful to sense; and the very end and design of it is to be a sensible proof and conviction to us of some thing which we do not see.

And for want of this condition, transubstantiation, if it were true, would be no miracle; it would indeed be very supernatural, but for all that, it would not be a sign or wonder; for a sign or wonder is always a sensible thing, something that is wonderful and astonishing to sense, otherwise it is no sign or wonder. That such a change as is pretended in transubstantiation should really be wrought, and yet there should be no sign and appearance of it, is a thing very wonderful; but not to sense: for our senses perceive no change; the bread and wine to all our senses remaining just as they were before. Now that a thing should remain to all appearance just as it was, hath nothing at all of wonder in it. We wonder indeed when we see a strange thing done: but no man wonders when he sees nothing done.

So that to speak the truth, transubstantiation, if they will have it a miracle, is such a miracle, as any man may work, that hath but confidence to face men down that he works it, and the fortune to be believed. And however they of the church of *Rome* are wont to magnify their priests, chiefly upon the account of this miracle, which they say they can work every day, and every hour if they please; yet I cannot understand, how it magnifies them so much; for when this great work as (they call it) is done, there is nothing more appears to be done, than if there were no miracle. Now such a miracle as to all appearance is no miracle, I see no reason why a protestant minister may not work as often as he pleaseth, as well as they: or if he can but have the patience to let it alone, it will work itself: for certainly nothing in the world is easier than to let a thing be as it is, and by speaking a few words over it, to make it just what it was before. In short, a miracle is a wonder to sense, and where a man sees nothing that is strange done, there is no miracle: for if he will call it a miracle, when things remain just as they were, and no sensible change is made in them, every man may every day work a thousand such miracles. I come now in the

II. Place to consider in what circumstances, and with what cautions and limitations, miracles do give testimony to the truth and divinity of any doctrine; for instance, of the christian doctrine: and for the clearing of this matter, I shall lay down these propositions.

1. That the entire proof of the christian doctrine or religion, consisting of many considerations, when taken together, make up a full demonstration of the truth of it, when perhaps no one of them, taken singly and by itself, is a convincing and undeniable proof.

The christian religion hath all the characters of divinity upon it, which any religion can be expected to have; whether we consider the doctrine of it, in which there is nothing unworthy of God; for it makes such a representation of God, and gives such directions concerning his worship, as are most agreeable to those apprehensions which the wisest men always had of God, and of that service which is most proper to be given to him. Indeed it declares something concerning God, which is very mysterious and past our comprehensions, but this ought not to offend us, since natural light always did acknowledge the divine nature to be incomprehensible.

The precepts likewise of this religion are highly reasonable, and such as plainly tend to the perfection and happiness of human nature; and the arguments to enforce these precepts, are not only very powerful in themselves, but very suitable to the natural hopes and fears of men.

Or if we consider the author of this doctrine, our blessed Saviour, he will appear to be a divine person, and a teacher sent from God, by the clear predictions

concerning him long before he came, which when he came were exactly fulfilled in him; by the miracles he wrought to give testimony of him; by the eminent holiness and virtue of his life; and by innumerable things which he foretold concerning himself, the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the dispersion of the *Jewish* nation, and the success of his doctrine in the world, which were all afterwards punctually accomplish'd. All these proved him to be an extraordinary person. But he was likewise declared to be *the Son of God*, by a voice from heaven, and by his resurrection from the dead.

Or if we consider the first publishers of this doctrine, to whom *God bare witness, with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*, and the wonderful success they met withal, notwithstanding the outward meanness of their persons, insomuch that their doctrine very suddenly prevailed, and passed like lightning through the world; and in the space of a few years, spread itself beyond the utmost bounds of the vast *Roman* empire, and this in despite of the most powerful opposition and fiercest persecutions that ever were raised against any religion; so that like the children of *Israel* in *Egypt*, it did thrive under affliction, and the more it was oppressed, the more it grew and multiplied; because there was a divine power that did visibly accompany the first publishers of it, and men *were not able to resist the spirit whereby they spake*.

All these together make up a full and convincing demonstration of the truth and divinity of the christian doctrine: and yet perhaps no one of these alone is a sufficient proof of it. For tho' a doctrine be never so reasonable in itself, this is no certain argument that it is from God, if no testimony from heaven be given to it; because it may be the result and issue of human reason and discourse: and though a doctrine attested by miracles, yet the matter of it may be so unreasonable and absurd, so unworthy of God, and so contrary to the natural notions which men have of him, that no miracles can be sufficient to give confirmation to it; and therefore in some cases the scripture forbids men to hearken to a prophet, though he work a miracle. *Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, let us go after other Gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them: thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet. And the reason is given, ver. 5. Because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God.* From whence it is plain, that a miracle is not sufficient to establish the worship of a false God.

The sum of what I have said is this, that we do not found our belief of christianity upon any one argument taken by itself; but upon the whole evidence which we are able to produce for it, in which there is nothing wanting that is proper and reasonable to prove any religion to be from God.

2. But yet miracles are the principal external proof and confirmation of the divinity of a doctrine. I told you before, that some doctrines are so absurd, that a miracle is not a sufficient proof of them: but if a doctrine be such as is no ways unworthy of God, nor contrary to those notions which we have of him, miracles are the highest testimony that can be given to it, and have always been owned by mankind for an evidence of inspiration. And therefore *Nicodemus* takes it for an acknowledged principle, that miracles are a sign of *a teacher sent from God*. *John iii. 2. We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for none can do these miracles which thou dost, except God be with him.* And the scripture constantly resolves the divinity of any person or doctrine into miracles as the chief external evidence that they are from God. This was the testimony which God gave to *Moses*, to satisfy the people of *Israel* that he had sent him. *Exod. iv. 1. And Moses answered, and said, But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee.* Upon this God tells *Moses*, that he would give him a power of miracles, to be an evidence to them that *they may believe, that the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.* And all along in the old testament, when God sent his prophets to make any new revelation, or upon any extraordinary message, he always gave credit to them, by some sign or wonder. And when he sent his son into the world, he bare witness

to him, by more and greater miracles than *Moses* or any of the prophets had wrought. And to this testimony both our Saviour himself and the apostles appeal, as the great evidence of the divinity of their doctrine. When *John* the Baptist sent his disciples to our Saviour, to be satisfied whether he were the *Messias*, he refers them to his miracles, *Matth. xi. 4, 5. Go and shew John again those things which you do bear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up.* And *John v. 36. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* And *Acts ii. 22. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀποδείκνυμενον εἰς ὑμᾶς, a man demonstrated by God to you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which he did in the midst of you.* And *Acts xiv. 3.* it is said, that when the apostles preached the gospel, God gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. From all which it is plain that our religion appeals to miracles, as the great external confirmation of it.

3. Especially if miracles have all the circumstances of advantage given to them which they are capable of; if they be many and great, publick and unquestionable, and universal and of long continuance. And such were the miracles wrought by *Moses*, and by our Saviour and his apostles, which for their nature and quality, for the number and continuance of them, and for all other circumstances that may give credit to them, and argue them to be from God, are in no degree to be equalled by those which any other religion hath pretended to.

And in these circumstances, miracles alone in most cases are a sufficient proof of the divinity of a doctrine: for there is a great deal of difference in reason to be made between one or two strange and miraculous effects, and those not of the highest and most unquestionable rank of miracles neither, privately wrought, and before few witnesses; and a long continued series of miracles of all kinds, and such as are universally acknowledged to be above the power of nature, and those publicly wrought in the face and view of the world, in every city and country, by a great many persons. for many years, yea, for many ages together. The former may be doubted of, but the latter carry so sensible a conviction with them, that it is not credible, that the divine goodness should permit so great and overpowering a testimony to be given to a falsehood.

4. It cannot be denied, but that God doth sometimes permit miracles to be wrought for the countenancing of a false doctrine. This the heathens pretended to at their temples and oracles; and it is not incredible, that God should permit the Devil to do several strange and extraordinary things; though it be certain that there was a great deal of cheat and imposture mingled with them. To be sure the scripture owns the working of miracles by false prophets. *Moses* takes notice of it in his law, and provides against it as a case that might happen; and our Saviour expressly foretells it, *Matth. xxiv.* and so does *St. Paul, 2 Thess. ii.* that *the man of sin should come after the working of Satan, with power and signs and wonders of lies:* that is, should work miracles to countenance his false and impious doctrines. And the scripture likewise tells us, for what reason God does sometimes permit this to be done. For the trial of the good; *Deut. xiii. 3. For the Lord your God proveth you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your hearts.* And for the hardening of the wicked, by the just judgment of God; *2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. Because they received not the love of truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them ἐνέργειαν πλάνης, the efficacy of imposture, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

5. And lastly, God never permits miracles to be wrought for the confirmation of a false doctrine, but he affords sufficient marks, whereby those who are free and impartial enquirers after truth, and sincere lovers of it, may distinguish truth from imposture. So our Saviour tells us, that *the elect*, that is, the true and sincere christians, should not be deceived by the *signs and wonders of the false Christs and false prophets.* And therefore he was not afraid of having the credit of his doctrine weakened by foretelling that false prophets should work miracles; because

he knew when the Devil had done his utmost, the difference would be apparent enough between the confirmation which he had given to the christian doctrine, and what the Devil should be able to give to his instruments. As,

1. Either the doctrine would be absurd in itself, and such as no miracles can confirm. As in the case which *Moses* instanceth in, of a miracle wrought to seduce them from the worship of the one true God, who is naturally known, to the worship of idols. Or else,

2. It would be contrary to that doctrine which had already had a far greater and more divine confirmation. And this likewise is another reason intimated by *Moses*, why the people should not hearken to a prophet that would seduce them to idolatry, though he should work a miracle; *because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt*, that is, from that God who hath demonstrated himself to them by such a series of great and unquestionable miracles as ought in all reason to bear down any single sign and wonder.

And the case is the same, if miracles should now be pretended for the confirmation of any thing plainly contrary to the christian doctrine, which being established by such miracles as never were wrought in the world upon any other occasion, it cannot be thought reasonable, that any evidence inferior to this should be able to controul it, or to give credit to any thing that contradicted it. And in this case the apostle has expressly forbidden christians to hearken to a contrary doctrine, *though they themselves, or an angel from heaven should preach it*. Gal. i. 8. Therefore St. Paul expressly lays down this rule, whereby we may judge what miraculous powers are from the Spirit of God, and what not. 1 Cor. xii. 1. *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant, that is, what miraculous gifts are from the Spirit of God, and what not; and then ver. 3. he gives this rule, Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost: that is, if any man pretend to be inspired, and to be endowed with a miraculous power, and yet blasphemeth Christ, this spirit is not from God: but if any man be endowed with this power, and acknowledge Christ, we may safely conclude this power to be from the Holy Ghost.* The very same rule St. John lays down yet more plainly, 1 John iv. 1, 2, 3. *Believe not every spirit, that is, not every one that pretends to the gifts and inspirations of the Spirit; but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. And ver. 6. We are of God; he that knoweth God, beareth us: he that is not of God, beareth not us: hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* This seems at first sight to be a very odd rule, and what every false teacher, and every sect may lay down in favour of themselves, *be that knoweth God, beareth us: he that knoweth not God, beareth not us; and nothing can make it reasonable, but the consideration that the christian religion being already so abundantly confirmed beyond contradiction, is itself become a rule to try spirits or miracles by.* Or,

3. The miracles which false prophets work are presently confuted, and upon the spot. Thus *Moses* confuted and conquered *Pharaoh's* magicians, by working miracles which they could not work, which forced them to yield the cause, and acknowledge that it was *the finger of God*. And so likewise *Simon Magus*, who had gained so great a reputation among the people by his sorceries, as to be called *the mighty power of God*, was confuted by the apostles, who by the laying on of hands, conferred a miraculous power on men, which he not being able to do, would have purchased it with money. And so *Elymas* the forcerer was struck blind by St. Paul. And the miracles of the heathen temples and oracles, upon the preaching of the gospel, ceased, as being ashamed of themselves; as *Porphyry*, one of the bitterest enemies of christianity, does expressly acknowledge. Or else,

Lastly, The miracles wrought, or pretended to be wrought, to confirm false doctrines, are such as do some way or other confute themselves; or if they be real,

real, are sufficiently detected to be the pranks of the Devil, and not the great and glorious works of God. Such were the miracles of the heathen deities, wrought so privately and obscurely, and confessedly mixed with so much of imposture, as to bring a just suspicion upon them, that when they were real, the Devil was the author of them. And such were the miracles which are attributed to *Mahomet*; either grossly absurd and ridiculous, as that of part of the moon coming down into his sleeve, and his remanding it to its place again; or else destitute of all proof and witness, as that of a *camel's* speaking to him by night; and his *pigeon* whispering to him in the ear; which if it had been intended for a miracle, the *pigeon* should not have whispered, but have spoken out, that others might have heard it. But *Mahomet* was so conscious to himself of his own defect in point of miracles, that he laid no weight upon them, *being, as he said, not sent to convert the world by miracles, but to conquer them by force of arms.*

And now I am sorry I have occasion to say it, but it is too true, that the miracles pretended to by the church of *Rome*, for the confirmation of their erroneous doctrines, are of the same stamp with these, taxed by several of their best writers of imposture and forgery, of fable and romance, so extravagant and freakish, and fantastical, wrought without any necessity, and serving to no wise end, that they are so far from giving credit to their doctrines, that they are a mighty scandal to them, and to our common christianity: whereas the truly divine miracles, reported to us in scripture, how unlike are they to these? How venerable in themselves, and in all the circumstances with which they are related? never wrought but upon great necessity, and for excellent ends, full of benefit and advantage, of mercy and compassion to mankind; and in a word, such as are every way worthy of their author, having plain characters of the divine wisdom and goodness stamp'd upon them.

And thus I have done with the *first* thing I propounded to speak to, namely, that miracles are a divine testimony; and in what circumstances, and with what cautions and limitations they are so. I shall at present only draw some inferences from what hath been discoursed upon this argument.

1. What hath been said may satisfy us of the truth and divinity of the christian doctrine, which had so eminent a testimony given to it from heaven, and did at first so strangely prevail in the world, contrary to all human probability, *not by might nor by power, but by the spirit of the Lord.* No man can suppose a religion in circumstances of greater disadvantage, and upon all human accounts more unlikely to sustain and bear up itself, than christianity was. The first appearance of it was so weak, its beginnings so small, and the instruments employed in the propagation of it so mean and despicable, that no man but would have concluded it must have presently sunk and come to nought; and no other reason can be given of the strange success and prevalency of it, but that *it was of God, and therefore it could not be overthrown.*

2. From hence we may judge how groundless the pretences are, which men now a-days make to inspiration and infallibility; because this is not to be proved and made out any other way but by miracles. For either we must believe every pretence of this kind; and then we are at the mercy of every crafty and confident man, to be led by him into what delusions he pleases; or we must only believe those who give some testimony of their inspiration: but the evidence of inspiration was always miracles. This is the testimony which God hath always given to those whom he hath sent upon an extraordinary message to mankind. And this is that which we reasonably demand of our modern enthusiasts, and of the great pretender to infallibility, the bishop of *Rome*; because nothing can be more vain, than for men to pretend to inspiration, and an infallible spirit, without miracles. And yet I cannot learn that the *Popes* themselves, among all their boundless privileges and powers, do so much as pretend to a power of miracles, which yet is the only thing that can in reason support their pretences to infallibility.

3. You see what an immediate testimony from heaven God was pleased to give to the first preachers of the christian doctrine, to qualify them with any probability of success, to contest with violent and almost invincible prejudices
of

of men educated in a contrary religion, and which had the secular authority and laws on its side. For having this divine seal given to their commission, they did as it were carry the letters patents of heaven in their hands, and an authority paramount to that of human laws. And therefore the wisdom of God, which does nothing which is superfluous and unnecessary, did not think the apostles sufficiently armed and appointed for this design, by a commission from the mouth of the Son of God, without this divine seal and testimony of miracles, as a visible evidence of their divine commission. And therefore our Saviour after he had commissioned them *to preach the gospel to all nations*, commanded them not to enter upon this work, nor *to depart from Jerusalem, till they had received the promise of the Father*; that is, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, *Acts i. 4.* And so our Saviour explains it, *Luke xxiv. 47.* where, after he had commanded, *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*, he adds, *ver. 49. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.* And to the same purpose, *Acts i. 8. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you*; by which he tells us, they were qualified to be witnesses unto him, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria. and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

4. And lastly, The consideration of what has been said, doth justly upbraid us, that our religion, which hath such evident marks of divinity upon it, and comes down to us confirmed by so many miracles, should yet have so little efficacy upon the lives of the greatest part of those who call themselves christians. 'Tis true, miracles are now ceased among christians, our religion being sufficiently established by those that were wrought at first; and now the greatest miracle in these latter ages, is a good man, a true and sincere christian: but the laws of christianity are still the same: and the motives and arguments to a good life are still the same; and though the miraculous gifts of the Spirit have left the world, yet the sealing and sanctifying gifts of the Holy Ghost do still remain. We cannot now speak all languages, as the apostles did: but we may do that which is much better, and more pleasing to God; we may live holy and virtuous lives. We have not that faith which works by miracles: but we may have that which is far more excellent, *the faith which works by charity*: which, if we believe St. Paul, is more than *to speak with the tongues of men and angels*, more than *to prophesy*, and *to understand all mysteries and all knowledge*.

The admirable piety and virtue of the first christians are still upon record for our imitation: but I know not how it comes to pass, we chuse rather lazily to admire those patterns, than vigorously to imitate them; as if the holiness of those times were also miraculous, and not intended for the imitation of succeeding ages; as if it were impossible for us now to lead such lives as they did; as if heaven and earth, God and men, and all things were altered since that time; as if the christian religion was now quite dispirited, and had lost all its vigour and force; and as if the holy Spirit of God had to all intents and purposes forsaken the world, and were retired to the Father.

But our religion is still the same it was: the precepts of it as reasonable, and the promises of it as powerful as ever: God is still the same he was; and Christ still *at the right hand of God, making intercession for us*; and the holy Spirit of God still ready to assist us, *to every good word and work*.

To conclude, we have, beyond comparison, the best and most reasonable religion in the world; a religion which carries along with it the greatest evidence of its truth, which contains the best rules and directions for a good life, which offers the most powerful assistance to the obedience of its laws, and gives the greatest encouragements thereto, by the assurance of a blessed immortality in another World. Now the better our religion is, our case is so much the worse, if we be not made good by it. Philosophy had some effect upon the world to make some men temperate and chaste, just and honest in their lives. And the Jewish religion (as weak and imperfect as it was, and though it was but *the shadow of good things to come*) hath yet left us many eminent examples of good and holy men.

What

What then shall become of us, if the best institution in the world, the blessed gospel of the Son of God, have less effect upon us than the doctrine of *Pythagoras*, and the law of *Moses* had upon them? *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him! God also bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. To which blessed and glorious Trinity, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.*

S E R M O N C L X X V I.

Of the Miracles wrought in Confirmation of Christianity.

H E B. ii. 4.

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.

I HAVE begun to discourse upon these words, from which I told you *three things* offer themselves to our consideration. *The second Sermon on this Text.*

First, That miracles are a divine testimony to a person or doctrine. God is here said to bear witness to the apostles, by signs and wonders, and miracles.

Secondly, That God gave this testimony to the apostles and first publishers of the gospel in a very eminent manner; for so the phrase signifies, *God bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and miracles*; so many words to the same sense being purposely used to signify the greatness of the thing.

Thirdly, The reasons why miracles are now ceased in the church, and have been for several ages; so that there have been no footsteps of this miraculous power for several ages past. The *first* I have spoken to, and proceed now to the

Second thing which I proposed to consider, *viz.* That God gave testimony to the apostles and first publishers of christianity, in a very eminent manner; for so the expression in the text signifies, where so many words are used for the same thing, to express, according to the manner of the *Hebrew* phrase, the greatness of the thing, *God bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*, that is, with many and great miracles, *καὶ μερισμοῖς*, and distributions of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will; that is, God distributed these several miraculous powers and gifts among the apostles and first preachers of the gospel; not all to every one of them, but some to one, and some to another, as to him seemed best, and was most for the benefit and edification of the church.

The history of it in short is this. When our blessed Saviour ascended into heaven, he promised to send down his Spirit in miraculous gifts upon his apostles, to give credit to his doctrine, and to qualify them for the more speedy planting and propagating of it in the world; and accordingly, not many days after he was ascended into heaven, as an evidence of the power and glory he was invested withal, he, according to his promise immediately before his ascension, sent down the Holy Ghost upon the apostles in a visible manner, that is, in the form of fiery cloven tongues, as an emblem of one of the principal gifts they were endowed withal, *viz.* the knowledge and ability of speaking several languages, which they had never learned. And this happened upon the day of *Pentecost*, that so the gospel might exactly correspond to the dispensation of the law, which was the type and

figure of it. And therefore, as our Saviour died at the time of *the Jewish passover*, which was the type of his sufferings; so the gospel, which was the perfection and fulfilling of the law, began to be published at the very same time that the law was given from mount *Sinai*, viz. at the end of the seven weeks after the *passover*. For at this time the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles in miraculous powers and gifts; *when this new law was to come forth out of Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

And among these gifts, the *first* we find mentioned was the gift of tongues; without which the gospel must of necessity have been very slowly propagated in the world: for had the apostles been first to learn the several languages of the nations they were to preach to, how tedious a work would that have been? It requiring the industry of some years, to gain so perfect a mastery of a strange language, as to be able to use it with that freedom and readiness which is necessary for such a work.

And this gift all the apostles had, because they all had occasion for it, being designed by our Saviour to be the chief publishers of his gospel to the world. And this gift did also continually reside upon them, and not only at some times, as some other gifts did, because they had constant use of this gift of tongues.

The interpreting of things spoken in a strange tongue, was also a gift distinct from the gift of tongues, though attending it; insomuch that some persons had one, and some the other. So the apostle tells us, *1 Cor. xii. 10. To one is given divers kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.* The occasion of which was plainly this; it might happen, and often did, that the auditory might consist of people of several nations; now because no man could speak more than one language at once, it was convenient others should have the gift of interpreting what was spoken, to those who understood not the language in which it was spoken, that so all might receive the benefit of what was delivered, and be edified thereby. So that here were two several gifts serving the same end, viz. the conveying of the knowledge of the gospel to mankind, in a more speedy way than it could have been done by ordinary means; and these were very plain and sensible miracles, unquestionably supernatural, and evident to the senses of all men. So that the gospel, where-ever it was preached, carried its own testimony along with it, and was confirmed by the very manner of its conveyance and delivery: and well might men entertain it as a divine doctrine, when the very manner and the means whereby it was published was a miracle.

And here I cannot but take notice, how contrary the arts and the ways of the church of *Rome* are to the methods of God, and that when he was at the expence of so many miracles to publish this doctrine to the world, they should use so much industry and violence to conceal it. God was pleased to endow the first preachers of it with the gift of tongues, that *their sound might go into all the earth, and their word to the end of the world*, that there might be no nation nor language where this saving knowledge might not come, that the sermons which they preached, and the prayers which they put up to God in publick, for themselves and the people, and all the offices of religion which they performed, might be fully understood by all, and that all might join in them, and have the benefit and comfort of them; that their understandings might be informed and enlightened by what was spoken, and their affections raised and warmed by their understandings, and their wills excited by their affections, and that the effect of all this might appear in their lives and practice. Thus it was in the primitive christian church: but in the church of *Rome*, things are managed in a quite contrary way, and have been for several ages. The doctrine of salvation, as it is contained and delivered in the holy scripture, is a *sealed book*, which the people are not thought *worthy to open or look into*. This *bread of life which came down from heaven*, is like the *shew-bread* among the Jews, which none may eat but the priest only, unless it be by extraordinary favour, and particular licence from the bishop. The people indeed come together, and are present at the prayers and devotion of the priest; but the priest that prays is a barbarian to them, and all the while the understanding of the people is unfruitful, and they cannot say *Amen*, because they understand not what he says.

But

But let any man shew me the least intimation in scripture or antiquity, that our Saviour or his apostles, or the primitive church, ever used this way; and yet the danger of error and heresy was as great then, as it is now. So that the church of Rome must pretend themselves wiser than our Saviour and his apostles; and to be more careful to prevent heresy in the church, than they were. This they were loth to say; and yet they must say it, if they will justify their own doings. But the plain truth is, there is another and truer reason for it, though they are not willing to own it, and that is this; if the scriptures were permitted to the people in a language which they understood, the errors of their church would be discovered and laid open, and men would plainly discern how contrary many of their doctrines and practices are, to those of our Saviour and his apostles: *for every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be discovered.*

Secondly, The next miraculous gift I shall mention after the gift of tongues, is the gift of prophecy, or foretelling things future, which was always looked upon as an evidence of inspiration. And this we find mentioned, *1 Cor. xii. 10. To another prophecy,* and in several other places; and to this gift the apostle gives a great pre-eminence, *1 Cor. xiv. 1. Covet spiritual gifts: but rather that ye may prophecy:* because foretelling of things to come, was always esteemed by mankind an evidence of a person divinely inspired, and consequently was one of the greatest testimonies of the truth of christianity, and this the angel that appeared to St. John particularly takes notice of, *Rev. xix. 10. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.* The prophecies of that book were to be a standing testimony of the truth of christianity in all ages of the church.

Thirdly, The next gift is that of healing all manner of diseases. And this the apostles seem generally to have had, and the elders of the church also, whose peculiar office it was to pray over the sick, and to anoint them with oil; and upon their prayers, God was pleased to grant miraculous recoveries, as we find expressly promised, *James v. 14, 15. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.*

This miraculous power we find likewise mentioned to be conferred on the apostles in our Saviour's life time, when he first gave them commission to preach the gospel to the Jews, *Mark vi. 12, 13.* where it is said, that *they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many Devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*

And now that this miraculous gift is ceased, there is no reason why the meer ceremony of *anointing with oil* should continue? which yet is still used in the church of Rome, and made a sacrament; though it signify nothing: for they do not pretend to heal men by it; nay they pretend the contrary, because they never use it, but in extremity; and where they look upon the person as past recovery; and if they did not think so, they would not use it.

But besides the healing, with this solemnity of anointing with oil, and with prayer, which seems to have been used by the elders of the church only upon those who were members of the church, there was likewise a general gift of healing, which the apostles exercised upon all occasions where-ever they came; and this was performed only by laying their hands on the sick. And this we find promised by our Saviour to his apostles when he gave them commission to preach the gospel to all the world, immediately before his ascension; and not only to the apostles, but to those who should believe upon their preaching; *Mark xvi. 17, 18. These signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out Devils, &c.* And then it follows, *they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

Fourthly, The power of raising the dead, which hath always been esteemed one of the greatest and most unquestionable miracles of all other. A principal part of the apostles office was to be witnesses of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead, whereby he was so powerfully demonstrated to be the Son of God. But because this was a strange relation, and not easy to be credited, by those who were strangers to the apostles, and had never known them before; therefore that they might witness this with more authority, God was pleased to endow them with a miraculous power

of all kinds; and particularly with a power of raising the dead; and then there was no difficulty in receiving their testimony concerning our Saviour's resurrection, when men saw them in his name raise others from the dead. And of this we have two instances in the *Acts* of the apostles; of St. Peter's raising *Dorcas*, *Acts* ix. and St. Paul's raising *Eutychus*, *Acts* xx. And *Ireneus*, who lived in the age after the apostles, tells us, that in his time this power continued among christians.

Fifthly, Another miraculous gift was that of discerning spirits; the principal use of which was, to try and judge who were true prophets. And of this the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xiv. 29. *Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.* And ver. 32. *The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.* And this is likewise called by the same apostle, the gift of discerning spirits, 1 Cor. xii. 10. *To another is given the discerning of spirits.* Those who pretended to this gift, were tried by the bishops and elders of the church, as the prophets were tried among the Jews by the *Sanhedrim*. And of these kinds of assemblies among the christians, for the trial of prophets, *Eusebius* speaks particularly in his fifth book.

And it should seem likewise that this gift of discerning spirits, extended also to the discovery of the secrets of men's hearts; by the revealing whereof, unbelievers were many times suddenly struck and convinced; as may very probably be collected from 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. *But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned; he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.*

And upon this miraculous gift of knowing the secrets of men's hearts, it seems to be very probable, that that which is commonly called *the power of the keys* did depend; I mean the power of remitting or retaining sins: for they who had the privilege of knowing men's hearts, might do this upon certain grounds, and were secured from mistake in the exercise of their power upon particular persons; which the priests and ministers of the church now are not, nor can be; because they cannot see into men's hearts, whether they be truly penitent and qualified for forgiveness or not. For I cannot easily believe but that those words of our Saviour, *whose sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose sins ye retain, they are retained*; were intended to signify something more than a mere declaration of the promises and threatnings of the gospel, which any man might make as well as the apostles and ministers of the church. For that God will forgive the penitent, and that he will not pardon the sinner, except he repent, is as true from any man's mouth, as from an apostle's: and as to the absolution of this or that particular person, though a minister by the skill and knowledge of his profession, is ordinarily and reasonably presumed, by virtue of his office, to be a better judge of a man's repentance, than other persons are, and therefore may with more authority and satisfaction to the penitent declare his judgment and opinion concerning him; yet not being able to see into his heart, he may be mistaken concerning him; and if he be, his declaring his sins to be forgiven, that is, his absolution of him will do him no good: and on the other hand, his refusal to absolve him, if he be truly penitent, will do him no harm. As the judgment of a skilful lawyer is of greater authority, and more satisfactory to us, concerning our title to an estate, than the opinion of another man, who is not of the profession, nor presumed to have the like skill; but yet for all this, his judgment does not alter the case, and if in truth the law be otherwise, our title is bad for all this skilful man's opinion of the goodness of it.

And thus much is granted by the church of *Rome*, that if the priest be mistaken in the use of the keys, and gives absolution to one that is not truly penitent, his sins are not remitted; or if a person be excommunicated that is not truly guilty, his sins are not retained; what *he binds on earth, is not bound in heaven; and he whom he looseth and absolves on earth, is not absolved in heaven*. But the protestants go farther, and do not only make a mistaken absolution or excommunication void in itself; but they do not make the absolution of the priest at all necessary to the forgiveness of sins, but only convenient for the satisfaction and comfort of the penitent. For which reason, our church does not require a formal absolution to be given to the dying penitent, unless he himself desire it; which is a certain argument, that in the judgment of our church, the absolution of the priest is not necessary

cessary to the forgiveness and salvation of the penitent. For had they thought it necessary, they would have enjoined the priest to give it to every one whom he judged penitent, whether he desired it or not.

So that the absolution of the priest, having only the authority of a man, presumed to be skilful in the office, but no certain effect, in case he be mistaken (as he very easily may be, and if he be, as he ought to be, a charitable man, no doubt often is) I cannot think but that this power of *remitting and retaining sins*, so solemnly conferred on the apostles by our Saviour, had something in it that was miraculous, and extraordinary, and did suppose the knowledge of men's hearts, and that they were not mistaken in the application of this power to particular persons; and consequently, that in that miraculous and extraordinary degree, it was peculiar to the apostles and their times. For I cannot easily be brought to believe, that the meaning of this great promise to the apostles should be only this, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, if ye be not mistaken, as in many cases ye will be, and in any case ye may be, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* And if more be meant than this, it must suppose a miraculous power of discerning the sincerity of men's hearts.

And therefore when the power of the keys is conferred on the ministers of the gospel, in our form of ordination, I suppose that only one or both of these *two* things is intended by it, *viz.* a power to admit persons into the christian church by baptism, in which is sealed to them the remission of sins; and to cast persons out of the communion of the christian church, by excommunication and the censures of it: and an authority, by virtue of their office, to declare to men the terms of pardon and forgiveness, which cannot be that infallible power of absolving which the apostles had.

And I am the rather induced to think so, because I find it promised to the apostles, together with the miraculous power and efficacy of prayer, which St. Chrysostom reckons among the miraculous gifts, which he says were ceased in his time. That it was thus promised, you may see *Matth. xviii. 18, 19. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* Again, *I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* But surely no man will pretend that any two christians or ministers have now this power, that whatever they shall agree together to ask of God, which is fit and lawful in behalf of any person, God will certainly grant it upon their request. In the same sense I understand several other texts concerning the efficacy of the prayers of the apostles and first christians, as in a great measure miraculous, and peculiar to the first times of christianity. And I think any man that attentively considers them, will think that they cannot well be understood otherwise. Such as these, *Matth xxi. 22. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* *Mark xi. 24. I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* *John xiv. 14. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it; and Chap. xv. 7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you,* *1 John iii. 22. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him;* and *Chap. v. 14, 15. And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask any thing, according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* These promises I take to contain something extraordinary, and peculiar to the first times of christianity. And this will appear exceeding probable, if we consider the occasion and circumstances of these promises which are so often joined with the promise of a miraculous power, as in the place I mentioned before, *Matth. xviii. 18, 19.* where after the power of *binding and loosing*, it immediately follows, that *if two of you shall agree on earth touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* *Matth. xxi. 22. and Mark xi. 23.* says our Saviour there to his disciples; *Have faith in God: for verily I say unto you, whosoever shall say to this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have*

have whatsoever he saith. And then immediately it follows, *Therefore I say unto you, whatsoever things you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and ye shall have them*; that is, whatever ye desire of God to do, he shall miraculously do it, upon your prayers. So likewise *John xiv. 12, 13, 14. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* Still you see this extraordinary efficacy of prayer is joined with the power of miracles, as one part and branch of it. More particularly, we find the forgiveness of the sins of those whom they prayed for, expressly promised. *1 John v. 15. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him.* And then it follows; *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for the sin that is not unto death.* Where forgiveness of sins, upon the prayers of christians for one another, is promised, except in the case of *a sin unto death*, by which is meant apostasy from christianity to the heathen idolatry, which is the reason of the caution which follows; *Little children keep yourselves from idols.* And this extraordinary efficacy of prayer, we find promised in a more special manner to the elders of the church, *James v. 14, 15. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

In comparing of all these texts, it seems plain, that both the power of *remitting and retaining* sins, and the strange efficacy of prayer, which were promised to the apostles and first christians, had something miraculous and extraordinary in them, and were peculiar to the first ages of the church. I will not be peremptory in these things; but this seems to be the most genuine and reasonable interpretation of these texts.

Sixthly, And besides these which I have mentioned, there was likewise a power of inflicting corporal punishments and diseases upon scandalous and obstinate christians; which in scripture is called, *a delivering men up to Satan, for the destroying or tormenting of their bodies, that their souls might be saved at last.* And of this kind were those diseases which befel the *Corinthians*, for their disorderly and irregular carriage at the sacrament. of which the apostle speaks, *1 Cor. xi. 30. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*; that is, to some of them these distempers proved mortal. And we find that this power did in some cases extend to the inflicting of sudden and present death, as in the case of *Ananias and Sapphira*. And indeed considering that christianity was at first destitute of any countenance from the civil power, some such power as this was necessary to maintain the authority of the apostles against the contumacious and disobedient.

And then, *lastly*, there was the power of casting out Devils in the name of Christ, which was common to the meanest christian, and continued in the church a long time after most of the other gifts were ceased, as *Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Arnobius*, do most expressly testify concerning their times.

Thus you see that there were almost all imaginable kinds of miraculous powers conferred upon the apostles and first christians, to give the greater establishment and confirmation to the christian doctrine.

All the reflection I shall make upon what has been said, shall be this; since our religion comes down to us confirmed by such miraculous powers, *we ought to take the more earnest heed to it*, to believe it more stedfastly, and to practise it more carefully in our lives. *For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*

S E R M O N CLXXVII.

Of the Miracles wrought in Confirmation of Christianity.

H E B. ii. 4.

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.

I N these words, *three* things offer themselves to our consideration.

*The third
Sermon on
this Text*

First, that miracles are a divine testimony given to a person or doctrine.

Secondly, that God gave this testimony to the apostles and first publishers of the gospel in a very eminent manner. Of these *two* I have discoursed at large, and now proceed to the

Third and *last* thing which I proposed, *viz.* the reason why these miracles are now ceased in the christian church, and have been for a long time, so that there have been no footsteps of this miraculous power for many ages. And in the handling of this argument, I shall do these *three* things.

I. Shew that these miraculous gifts and powers have ceased in the christian church for several ages.

II. I shall assign a plain reason of the ceasing of miracles after such a time.

III. Answer the objection from the innumerable miracles which have been and are still pretended to be wrought in the church of *Rome*.

I. I shall shew, that these miraculous powers and gifts have ceased in the church for several ages. That they are now ceased we find by certain experience; nor are they pretended to at this day by any part of the christian church, except the church of *Rome*, where yet they are nothing so plentiful now a-days, as they were in those ignorant ages, from the time of the degeneracy and corruption of the western church down to the reformation; and now chiefly pretended to in those parts of the *Roman* communion, where their religion reigns without any contradiction, and the people are under the awe and lash of the *Inquisition*, so that they dare neither gainsay, nor offer to detect the forgery and imposture of them; and yet here is less need of them, because the people are all of a mind, and believe as the church would have them, and dare not for their lives do otherwise. For where the *Inquisition* rules, and ignorance, the mother, not of true devotion, but of credulity and superstition, is carefully preserved, there is no need of miracles to make people believe what they have a mind to: but in other places, where their religion is opposed, and there is great occasion for them, both to confirm those of their own religion, and to reduce hereticks and unbelievers, there is little or no pretence to them, as I shall shew by and by.

So that all over the christian church, except in the church of *Rome*, all pretence to these miraculous powers and gifts is now ceased, and hath been for many ages. *St. Chrysostom* speaking of his time, which was about 400 years after Christ, says that these miraculous powers were then ceased, and speaks as if no footsteps of them were left in the pastors and governors of the church, much less among private christians; for which he gives us this substantial reason (which I shall speak to afterwards) that christianity being now already established by miracles, there was no reason to expect the continuance of them. *St. Augustin* indeed, sometime after, speaks of many miraculous things done at sepulchres of the martyrs. But this

doth not contradict what St. Chrysostom had said, because he speaks of the living teachers and members of the church, in whom those miraculous gifts and powers were ceased: but that the same miraculous cures were wrought upon the prayers of christians, at the tombs of the martyrs, is a confirmation of the thing, that God designed to honour the primitive christians and martyrs with these gifts, and not to continue them to the succeeding ages of the church; and therefore God was pleased that so many wonderful things should be done at their sepulchres, to shew that he did intend, that these miraculous powers and gifts should die with them, and continue no longer in the living members of the church.

II. I shall now assign a plain reason of the ceasing of these miraculous gifts after such a time; namely, because there was not the like necessity and occasion for them, that there was before. They were at first in a great degree necessary to introduce the gospel into the world, which was destitute of all other helps and advantages, to recommend it to the esteem and liking of mankind; to give credit to a new doctrine and religion, so contrary to the inveterate prejudices of men, bred up in another religion very different from this, and so opposite to the lusts and interests of men; to make way for the more speedy and effectual planting of this religion in the world; to strengthen the hands of the first publishers of it, and to give credit to their testimony, concerning that strange relation of theirs, of the resurrection of Christ from the dead; to be a sensible evidence and conviction to men, of the divinity of that new doctrine which was preached unto them, and to support and confirm them in the belief and profession of it, against those terrible sufferings and persecutions, which for the sake of it they were exposed to. For these reasons God was pleased to shed abroad so plentifully these miraculous gifts, among the first preachers of christianity; and as these reasons ceased or abated, so did these miraculous powers and gifts: and therefore as soon as the gospel was planted, which it was in a great part of the then known world, during the lives of the apostles, the gift of tongues ceased, and we hear no more of it, because there was no farther use and occasion for it. Other gifts did continue longer, but abated by degrees, according as christianity gained ground and establishment, and they grew less frequent, as there was less need of them. The power of casting out Devils, which was most common (for every christian had it) continued longest; and there was reason it should continue so long as the Devil reigned, and the Pagan idolatry was kept up, to shew that the Spirit of Christ was superior to the Devil, and would finally overcome him, and overthrow his kingdom, according to that of St. John, 1 John iv. 4. *Ye are of God, little chilbren, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* And this appeared in that they were able in the name of Christ to cast him out, where-ever he had taken possession, which God permitted to be very frequent in those times, for the more glorious manifestation of his power, in *casting out the prince of this world.* But when the powers of the world became christian, and the heathen idolatry was every where overthrown, and Satan's kingdom every where destroyed, then this miraculous gift also ceased, there being no farther occasion for it. And now that *the kingdoms of the world were become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ*, and that the gospel was planted, and had taken firm root and was fully settled and established, these miraculous powers, which were at first necessary to ballance the mighty difficulties and oppositions which christianity met withal, and to supply the want of all manner of countenance from the civil authority, were withdrawn and did cease, because there was no need of their longer continuance.

Besides that it is to be considered, that those miraculous powers which manifested themselves in the first ages of christianity, were intended by God to give a standing confirmation to it in after ages; as the miracles that were wrought at the giving of the law, and the bringing of the children of *Israel* into *Canaan*, were designed for a standing confirmation of the *Jewish* religion, the memory whereof was so carefully preserved and transmitted to after ages, that they needed not to be repeated.

I come now in the

III. And last place to answer that objection from the innumerable miracles which have been, and still are pretended to be wrought in the church of *Rome*.
And

And so indeed we find that the *Arians* and other hereticks in former times pretended to miracles, for the confirmation of their errors, a good while after miracles were generally ceased in the christian church, which shews that this is no new or strange thing.

In answer to this objection: I desire these following particulars may be considered.

First, that the most learned and judicious writers of the *Roman* church do acknowledge that there is no necessity of miracles now, and that christianity is sufficiently established by the miracles which were wrought at first to give testimony to it; and therefore not being necessary, without manifest evidence of fact, it is not necessary to believe that they are continued.

Secondly, The miracles pretended to by the church of *Rome*, are of very doubtful and suspected credit, even among the wisest persons of their own communion; and therefore I hope they do not expect we should give much credit to those miracles, of the truth of which they themselves are in so much doubt, that they are generally looked upon by the more prudent and learned among them, as pious frauds, to raise and entertain the devotion of the weak and ignorant. Several of them have been convicted of fraud and imposture, not only here in *England*, in times of popery, and at the beginning of the reformation; but in other countries, where that religion bears sway.

And it is observable, that the greatest part of the history of these miracles (which they call *legends*) were written in the *romance*-age, and much in the same style, with the like wantonness and extravagancy of fancy, and fulsom absurdity of invention, and it is to be feared with the like regard to truth. And I know not whether *romances* had not their name, as well as their original, from these *Roman legends* of which they are exact copies and imitations; and as these were *sacred*, so those were a sort of *civil legends*, in which they represented their *heroes* doing the like absurd feats and miracles in *chivalry*, as their saints in their *legends* are said to do in religion; and they were both written by the lazy and unlearned monks, and by them dressed up and fitted to the gust of those ignorant and superstitious ages.

And yet these *legends* of *lying wonders* have not only been put into the hands of the people, but lessons out of them have been taken, as out of the scriptures, and distributed into the publick offices of their church, to be read there, as the scriptures are, and instead of them; only with this difference, that the people are permitted to have the scriptures only in an unknown tongue, but the *legends*, out of which these lessons are taken, they are permitted to have at home, in their own tongue; as if there was no danger of error or heresy from false stories, but only from the word of truth. And herein is remarkably fulfilled that prophecy concerning the followers of Antichrist, 2 *Thess.* ii. 11. That *because they received not the truth in the love of it, God would send them strong delusions, ἐνέψει αὐτοὺς πλάνης, the efficacy of imposture, that they should believe a lie.* And how could they more solemnly declare the belief and love of lies, than by putting these ridiculous fables into the publick offices of the church, in place of the holy scriptures; and at the same time that they deny to the people the use of the scriptures in a known tongue, to permit them the use, and to recommend to them the reading of these *lying legends*, out of which these ridiculous lessons are taken?

Thirdly, The miracles of the church of *Rome*, supposing several of them to be true, have such marks and characters upon them, as render it very suspicious that they are not operations of God, or good spirits; but *the working of Satan*. If any man have but the patience to rake into these dunghills, and to read over these *legends*, even as they have by the latter collectors and compilers been purged and reformed, he shall find the miracles recited in them, to be generally of one stamp, very foolish and absurd, frivolous and trifling, wrought without any necessity, upon no good occasion, to no wise end and purpose; so that one may know them by their very countenances, to be the tricks and pranks of the Devil, and not the great and glorious works of God, such as are the miracles recorded in the holy scriptures.

Fourthly, The miracles of the church of *Rome*, taking them for true, are very impertinently and unseasonably wrought. When and where there is no need and occasion for them, they are very rife and frequent: but where there is greatest occasion for them, and most reason to expect them, they are either not at all, or very rarely so much as pretended to. In times and places where their religion did most absolutely bear sway, and few or none durst oppose it, and where the doctrines, which they pretended to confirm by these miracles, were most generally believed, as in those long, dark and ignorant times before the reformation, and now in *Italy* and *Spain*, where the *Inquisition* forceth them all to be of one belief, or to profess to be so; in these times and places, where there was least need and occasion for miracles, then and there did they most abound, even more, (if we may believe their histories) for several ages before the reformation, than in the times of our Saviour and his apostles. But since the reformation, and that many of their doctrines are called in question and disbelieved, miracles are grown rare, and almost ceased, even in popish countries, and they have had but very ill success with those few they have pretended to; witness the miracle at *Angiers* in *France*, of a child appearing over the altar at the time of *mass*, to convince all people of the doctrine of *transubstantiation*, with which the Papists made such a noise here in *England* about fourteen or fifteen years ago, and which at last was discovered to be an artificial juggle and contrivance of some cunning priest, and published to the world for a cheat, by the honest and worthy bishop of that place.

But where there seems to be most need of them, they are most wanting: as for the conversion of heathens, and the conviction of heretick infidels. For the conversion of heathens, in which case, if men did sincerely design the propagation of the true and uncorrupted christianity, I do not see why miracles might not yet reasonably be expected; but yet for all this, we hear of very few miracles, not so much as the gift of tongues, even upon this occasion. In the first planting of the *West-Indies*, we hear of no miracles, except the most prodigious cruelties that ever were in the world, to the infinite scandal of the christian name. And in the *East-Indies*, and *China*, *Xaverius* and the first missionaries speak with no assurance of any miracles wrought by them; and since that time they have so depraved the christian religion there, by concealing a most essential part of it, the death and sufferings of our Saviour, as if they were *ashamed of the cross of Christ*, that it is not credible, that God should vouchsafe the countenance of miracles to those who *preach another gospel*.

And then for the conviction of hereticks (as they are pleased to call us *protestants*) one would think miracles (since they have that power) would be very proper for that purpose to be wrought among them; as now here in *England*, where they are continually endeavouring (but especially of late with more than usual vigour and hopes) to restore their religion; and yet for all this, we cannot prevail with them to favour us with the sight of one miracle, in order to our conviction; but if they have any, they keep them private among themselves, though both reason and scripture tell us, *that miracles were not intended for them that believe; but to convince them that believe not*.

Fifthly, He from whom of all persons in that church, we might expect the most and greatest miracles, does not, so far as I can learn, pretend at all to that gift, I mean, the head of their church, the Pope, who both as he is *Vicar of Christ*, and *successor* of *St. Peter* in his full power and office, or if he be not his *successor*, yet as he is his *shadow*, and pretends to be his *successor*, might fairly pretend to a power of miracles above any in that church; and I have often wondered why he does not: but it seems he contents himself with infallibility, which is privilege and power enough for one man; and indeed if he had it, and could satisfy others that he hath it, *that* would serve his turn without miracles: but the mischief of it is, there is no other external evidence, which can reasonably satisfy others of any man's inspiration or infallibility, but miracles; and therefore the Pope hath done very unadvisedly, in pretending to one without the other, when he hath the same right and title to both, that is, none at all.

Sixthly,

Sixthly, Most of the doctrines in difference between us and the church of *Rome*, which they chiefly pretend to confirm by these miracles, are not capable of being confirmed by them. There are *three* sorts of doctrines, *two* of which are in their own nature incapable of being confirmed by a miracle, and a *third* upon supposition of its contrariety to the christian doctrine, which hath already had an unquestionable divine confirmation.

1. No doctrine which is contrary to sense, is capable of being confirmed by a miracle, as transubstantiation; which because it necessarily requires the renouncing of our senses, in order to the belief of it, for that very reason miracles can give no credit to it. For that which depends on the certainty of sense, as miracles certainly do, can be no competent argument to prove that which is contrary to sense, as transubstantiation evidently is.

2. No doctrine that does countenance or enjoin idolatry is capable of being confirmed by a miracle. This is evident from *Deut. xiii.* where *Moses* supposeth that a prophet might work a sign or a wonder; but if it was to seduce them from the worship of the true God, who is naturally known, to the worship of idols, in that case they were not to hearken to him, notwithstanding he wrought a miracle; but the church of *Rome* teacheth idolatry in their worship of images, and of the host, and in the invocation of saints and angels.

3. No doctrine contrary to any part of the christian doctrine, which hath already received an unquestionable divine confirmation, is capable of being confirmed by the miracles pretended to in the church of *Rome*, if they were real. For I hope they have not the face to pretend their miracles to be equal to those of our Saviour and his apostles, either for the certainty or greatness of them; and I have already shewn, that they notoriously want both the credit and certainty of our Saviour's miracles, and the marks of their divinity.

Now several of the doctrines of that church are directly contrary to, or inconsistent with the doctrines of christianity. Their endeavour to conceal from people the doctrine of the gospel, contained in the holy scriptures, is a notorious contradiction to the design of the gospel, and to that particular miracle whereby the knowledge of it was conveyed to the world, the gift of tongues; and then the service of God in an unknown tongue, which is inconsistent with true devotion, contrary to edification, and to the plain scope and design of a whole chapter of *St. Paul* to the *Corinthians*. And so likewise is the communion in one kind, to our Saviour's express institution; and the repetition of Christ's sacrifice, to as express a declaration of the apostle to the *Hebrews* to the contrary, as it is possible for words to make.

Seventhly and *lastly*, which falls heaviest upon them of all, the chief prophecies of the new testament, which are concerning false prophets, and concerning Antichrist, have marked him out by this character, that he should be a great worker of miracles, and magnify himself upon this pretence. *Matth. xxiv. 24.* *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very elect.* And *2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.* *St Paul* foretels there, that in the great degeneracy and falling away of the christian church, *the man of sin should come after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and wonders of lies*, that is, either false miracles, or miracles wrought to confirm false doctrines, and with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness, all the legerdemain and juggling tricks of falshood and imposture; and certainly nothing was ever more visible than these are in the church of *Rome*; whether we consider their impudent forgeries of writings; (which they have not the face now to deny) or the nature and character of their miracles. So that though *Bellarmino* is pleased to make miracles one of the marks of the true church, yet the miracles of the church of *Rome*, if we consider all the circumstances of them, are one of the plainest marks of Antichrist, and the very brand of the beast, as we find him described, *Revel. xiii. 13, 14.* *And he doth great wonders, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by means of those miracles which he had power to do.*

And now the church of *Rome* may be allowed to work miracles; and yet divine miracles, such as were wrought for the first confirmation of christianity, may

be ceased in the church; which is a sufficient answer to the objection, and upon the whole matter shews, that the miracles pretended to in the church of *Rome*, are so far from giving any confirmation to her doctrines, that they are rather an evident proof that she is the apostate and Antichristian church.

I might now draw *two or three* inferences from this whole discourse. As,

I. We have great reason to admire the wisdom and goodness of God in the dispensation of the gospel, that by the sending down of his holy Spirit to endow the first publishers of this heavenly doctrine with such miraculous gifts and powers, he hath given such abundant testimony to the truth of our religion, and such firm grounds for our faith to rely upon.

II. The consideration of what hath been said, convinceth men of the great sin of infidelity, and the unreasonableness of it, after so clear conviction and demonstration as God hath given to the world of the truth of christianity.

III. And *lastly*, They who believe the gospel, are utterly inexcusable, if they do not obey it, and live according to it. For this is the great end of all the miracles which God hath wrought for the confirmation of christianity, that by the belief of the gospel men might be brought to *the obedience of faith*, and live conformably to the precepts of that holy religion, which the Son of God by so many miracles hath planted and preserved in the world. But these I have * discoursed of on another occasion, and therefore shall insist upon them no farther at this time.

* See Vol
II. Sermon.
144.

S E R M O N CLXXVIII.

The Advantages of Truth, in Opposition to Error.

I JOHN iv. 4, 5.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

The first
Sermon on
this Text.

I N the beginning of this chapter, the apostle cautions christians against the false teachers, and false prophets, intending more especially those of the *Gnostick* sect, as is plain from the scope of the whole epistle, who were so busy to seduce christians to their impious ways, and to tempt them to apostatize from the christian religion to the heathen idolatry, for fear of persecution.

And to encourage them who had hitherto continued in the truth, and resisted the seducing arts of those false prophets, still to persevere in their holy profession and practice, he tells them what advantages they, who have embraced the truth and lived according to it, have above those who seduce men to errors, or are seduced by them. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* That which gives truth and the professors of it, the advantage over error and seducers, is, that truth is from God, and the Spirit of God dwells in those who sincerely embrace and obey it.

Ye are of God, that is, ye are taught by him, and instructed in the doctrine which is from God, and relish divine truth, which our Saviour calls *savouring the things which are of God*, in opposition to *the things of the world*, the lusts and interests of the world which sway and rule in those false prophets and seducing spirits.

For

For so it follows in the next verse, *they are of the world*; they are acted by worldly lusts and interests: *therefore speak they of the world*; they teach things suitable to their worldly affections and interests: *and the world beareth them*, they who are of the same temper are seduced and led away by them.

So that the apostle's design in these words, is plainly to shew the great advantage which truth and the sincere professors of it have above error, and the teachers and disciples of it.

Ye are of God. This phrase is very frequently, and very peculiarly used by St. John; it signifies to belong to God in a special and peculiar manner, and is the same with *being born of God*, and *being the children of God*, Chap. iii. 10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God.* Where you see *to be of God*, and *to be the children of God*, are the same thing: and so *to be the children of the Devil*, and *to be of the Devil*, are by this apostle used in the same sense, Chap. iii. 8. *He that committeth sin is of the Devil.* And ver. 12. *Cain was of that wicked one*, that is, *a child of the Devil*, as he had called such before, ver. 10. And because children do resemble their parents in nature and disposition, therefore those who are of a divine temper and disposition, who relish the things of God, and are apt to embrace the truths of God when they are duly propounded to them, are ready to be taught of God, are said likewise *to be of God*, John viii. 47. *He that is of God, beareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.* So here in the text, *Ye are of God*; ye are of a temper and disposition apt to relish divine things, ready to embrace the truths of God, and ye have entertained them, and are his children, and are led by his Spirit, and have the Spirit of God dwelling in you; and this makes you victorious. *Ye have overcome them.* He had spoken immediately before of *false prophets* and *Antichrist*, by which he doth point out not one particular person, but the whole number and faction of false teachers, as he tells us, Chap. ii. 18. *That now there are many Antichrists.* *Ye are of God and have overcome them.* This hath enabled you to resist those seducing spirits, and made you too hard for them, that *ye are of God*; *because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The force of the reasoning is this; *ye are of God*, that is, ye are taught of God, and have received his doctrine, and are born again by the word of God, and are his children, and being his children, ye have his Spirit; and the Spirit of truth and of God is a stronger principle, than that Spirit of error and seduction which is in the world, that is, the Devil. *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The spirit of truth is more powerful than the spirit of error and seduction; and consequently they that are of God, who sincerely embrace and obey the truth, are able to overcome all the temptations of the world to apostasy from the truth.

My work at this time shall be to shew what advantage good men, and those who sincerely embrace and obey truth, have to secure them in the ways of truth and holiness, against all the temptations of the Devil and the world. I say in the ways of truth and holiness, because there is a strict connection between a hearty embracing of the truth of God, and a sincere obedience to it. And the apostle speaks of both, in opposition to the *Gnosticks*, who did not only endeavour to seduce men to apostasy from the christian faith, but likewise from the practice of a holy life. Now to secure men against temptations to both these, they who *are of God*, who sincerely embrace and obey the truth, have a great advantage, because that spirit and principle, which rules and sways in them, is more powerful than that spirit which rules in the world and in the children of disobedience. *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*; and that in these three respects.

First, divine truth carries greater evidence along with it.

Secondly, The motives to persuade men to adhere to truth and holiness, are more operative and powerful.

Thirdly, There is a greater and more immediate assistance accompanies the truth of God, and they who entertain it are acted by a more powerful principle than that which is in the world.

First,

First, divine truth carries greater evidence along with it. As will appear if we consider these *three* things.

I. The doctrines that are from God have more intrinsic goodness in them, and teach such things as are more worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him.

II. The external confirmation of these doctrines is greater and hath more conviction in it.

III. The Spirit of God doth illuminate the minds of good men, and is concerned to lead them into the truth, and to secure them from dangerous and damnable errors.

I. The doctrines which are from God, have a more intrinsic goodness in them, and teach such things as are most worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him. Whoever supposeth God to make a revelation of himself to men whereby to conduct them to happiness, must in all reason suppose such a divine doctrine to contain plain rules and directions to that end, and powerful helps, motives and encouragements, to enable and excite men to the observation of those rules. For a man would naturally reason, that God who is so infinitely good, would in revealing his will to men, aim at no other end, but the happiness of his creatures: and that he being infinitely wise as well as good, the means would be proportionable, and consequently that the laws and precepts which he gives would apparently tend to the happiness of mankind: and because, if men have immortal souls, and are designed to live for ever, their greatest happiness is that of another world; therefore it is reasonable to conclude, that those rules and directions should principally regard the eternal happiness of men in another life, and in subserviency to that, should respect likewise the temporal happiness of men in this world.

And such laws and rules being supposed, the next thing to be expected, is, that God should consider the condition and circumstances of persons to whom these laws are given; and if they be averse to them, that they should be awakened and quickened to the observance of them, by such motives and encouragements as are proper and powerful to that end; and if they be weak and impotent to the performance of what God's laws require, that they should be enabled and assisted by a proportionable strength.

Now the doctrine of the christian religion, which our blessed Saviour revealed to the world, and (as we christians say,) by divine commission and authority, hath all these marks and characters of divinity upon it. The laws of it are plain and obvious to the common understanding of mankind; all men know what the precepts of piety, and goodness, and mercy, and righteousness, and integrity, and truth, and faithfulness, of meekness, and humility, and patience, and forgiveness, and forbearance, and charity, mean; and so I might instance in temperance and chastity, and all those other virtues and graces which the christian religion requires of us, and recommends to us. These all tend to the advancement and perfection of our natures, and makes us like to God, and capable of the enjoyment of him in the next life; and besides this, they do apparently conduce in all respects to our temporal happiness in this world. And excepting the case of persecution, (to which God hath promised abundant recompence in another world) the practice of these virtues is evidently to the advantage of particular persons in this world, and to the peace and happiness of human society.

And because of the great corruption of human nature, and the strong inclinations of it to vice, the gospel offers proportionable arguments and encouragements to men to persuade them to their duty; an act of oblivion and pardon for what is past; perfect reconciliation to God in and through the merits and mediation of our blessed Saviour, and the eternal rewards and punishments of another world; which to men that believe the immortality of their souls, and are not stupidly insensible of their interest, are the most powerful considerations in the world to take men off from sin, and to bring them to goodness.

And because the corruption of human nature hath brought a great weakness and impotency upon mankind, God is pleased in the gospel to offer to men the powerful assistance of his grace and holy Spirit, to enable them to perform all this

this which he requires of them. And beyond this, what can we expect God should discover to men, in order to their happiness in this world, or the other? And in all these respects the doctrine of the gospel, revealed from heaven by the Son of God, hath to any impartial considerer, infinitely the advantage of *paganism* or *mahometanism*, or any other doctrine or institution that ever the world was acquainted withal.

But now if we bring the doctrines of false prophets and seducing Spirits, whom St. *John* calls *Antichrists*, to this trial, we shall find that they are quite of another stamp, destitute of goodness, and calculated not for the happiness and benefit of men, but for base and unworthy ends; whereby it is evident that the teachers of them are not of God, but of the world, and therefore they speak from the world, and the world beareth them. And of this I will give two instances; one in those false teachers the *Gnosticks*, intended by the apostle in this epistle; and the other in a sort of seducers nearer to us in our own times.

As for the *Gnosticks*, besides their contradicting and virtual renouncing the main principles of christianity, by denying that Christ was really come in the flesh, or that he really died, or rose, affirming all this to be only in appearance; the sum of their doctrine was either a heap of unintelligible words and phrases, under a pretence of a high mystery; or a doctrine of liberty, as to all manner of vice and wickedness, under a pretence of perfection, and that whatever they did, they could not sin; both which at the first sight are as plain evidence as any reasonable man can desire, that such a doctrine could not be from God; nothing being more unlikely to be a divine revelation, than such absurd and confused stuff as no man can understand, and which hath no tendency to make men better. But above all, nothing can be more unworthy of God, nor more unlikely to proceed from him, than such a doctrine as gives encouragement to vice and wickedness of life, under what pretence soever it be. For what can be more contrary to God, and a greater affront to the reason of mankind, than to let men loose to do the vilest and lewdest things, under pretence of perfection in goodness.

The other instance I intend is nearer at hand, and concerns us more, and that is in the church of *Rome*, and those false teachers which she sends abroad into the world, and which at this day swarm among us; and never did any character more unluckily agree to any sort of men than this of the apostle does to that church and the teachers of it, that *they are of the world, and therefore they speak of the world, and the world beareth them*.

In which words there are three remarkable characters given of the false prophets and teachers.

1. That they are acted by a worldly spirit, and carry on a secular interest and design, *they are of the world*.

2. That they teach things suitable to their worldly interest and design, and therefore they speak *ἐκ τῆ κόσμου* from the world, according to that worldly spirit that acts them, and rules in them.

3. Those that hearken to them are a sort of people like themselves, of worldly affections and interests, *the world beareth them*.

1. They are acted by a worldly spirit, and carry on a secular interest and design of greatness and ambition, of dominion and tyranny, of riches and wealth. Any man that considers the church of *Rome* at this day, and by what steps and degrees, by what worldly ways and unworthy means she hath attained to that power and wealth and greatness, to that dominion and tyranny, which now for several hundred of years she hath exercised, not only over the consciences of men in the most cruel manner, but even over temporal princes and states, in commanding their treasures and armies, in deposing kings, and disposing of their kingdoms, and in all imaginable instances of secular dominion and tyranny, cannot but be satisfied by what spirit they are acted, and that they as visibly carry on a worldly interest and design, as the most ambitious secular prince ever did.

2. They teach things suitable to their worldly designs and interests. Let but any man impartially survey those which are the proper doctrines of the *Romish* church, and which we challenge for innovation and corruption of the truly ancient

tient catholick and christian doctrine, and it will at first sight be evident to him, whither these doctrines tend, and that they do not serve the ends of religion, but of worldly greatness and dominion. What greater instance of ambition, than the claim of the universal supremacy of the bishop of *Rome* over all christians and churches in the world, without the least ground, or indeed colour of ground, either from scripture or antiquity; and not only of an universal spiritual power over christians, but of an indirect temporal power over princes in order to spiritual ends, which may be extended to any thing, and hath been upon occasion, to the donation of kingdoms, and the deposing of princes, and the transferring of temporal dominion from lawful and hereditary princes, to those who had no manner of right or title? What more arrogant and directly tending to the enslaving of mankind, than their pretence to infallibility, which yet they could never agree among themselves where to place? What greater tyranny can be exercised over mankind, than to oblige them to an implicit faith, and blind obedience to believe what the church believes, though they do not know what it is; and to do what the church commands, though they doubt never so much of the lawfulness of it? Than to hide the word of God from them, and to lock it up in an unknown tongue, and to deter them from the free use of that which was designed by God to be the great instrument of the salvation of mankind? Than not to let men exercise their understandings in the service of God; nor when they join in publick prayers, to suffer them to know what it is they ask of God; as if *the priests lips* were so to *preserve knowledge*, as to keep it all to themselves, and not to make use of it for the benefit and edification of the people? And lastly, to impose upon men under pain of damnation, the belief of doctrines, not only contrary to the true sense of scripture, but to all the sense and reason of mankind, as is the doctrine of transubstantiation? How is it possible to bring people into a greater subjection to the priests, and dependance upon them, than by auricular confession, and that unreasonable doctrine of making the efficacy of the sacraments to depend upon the intention of the priest; and consequently to put it into the power of a malicious and bad man to damn all his parish? And to mention but one thing more, what better contrivance could be thought of to enrich the church, and drain the purses of the people, than their doctrines of purgatory, and prayers for the dead, of indulgences and satisfaction, and their forms of sins and vices of all kinds, called *the tax of the apostolick chamber*? Can any man think that these and such like doctrines are of God, which do so directly serve the ends of covetousness and ambition? Any one that does not wilfully shut his eyes, may plainly see that such doctrines, and such teachers, are of *the world*, and that they *speak* and *teach* these things out of a *worldly* interest and design.

And here I might take notice likewise, that *they speak from the world* also in another sense, by shewing what worldly and indirect means (not to say wicked and sinful arts) they commonly make use of to make disciples and gain proselytes, by flattery and falsehood, by concealing and misrepresenting their own doctrines and practices, by defaming their adversaries with known fictions and calumnies, tempting men from their religion by promises of temporal advantages, which when they have gained them, they do not always perform and make good. Can any thing be more opposite to the genius of true religion, than to promote it by means so plainly contrary to the very nature and design of it?

3. Those who hearken to them, and are seduced by them, are generally like themselves; *they speak from the world, and the world beareth them*. Not but that men of very honest and sincere minds may be seduced into great errors, through prejudice or weakness, or a melancholy superstition: but generally such a religion as is calculated for the promoting of secular interest, and is carried on by secular arts, does gain upon carnal and worldly minds; and it is usually some worldly consideration or other that prevails with men to embrace and profess it. A religion that can find out ways to save men without sincere repentance and a good life, is very fit to make proselytes in the world; they that teach such doctrines *speak from the world, and the world is very apt to bear them*.

And thus I have done with the *first* thing, whereby it appears, that divine truth carries great evidence along with it, namely, that the doctrines which are from God have more intrinsical goodness in them, and teach such things as are more worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him. I will be briefer in the rest.

II. The external confirmation of divine doctrines is greater, and carries more conviction along with it. By external confirmation, I mean chiefly that of miracles. And though the pagan religion pretended to some, and our Saviour plainly foretold, that *Antichrists* and *false prophets* should arise, and should *shew signs and wonders*; and St. Paul hath told us, that *the man of sin* should come with *signs and wonders and mighty power*; yet none of these are of any great consideration, in comparison of the many, and great, and unquestionable miracles, which were so universally wrought for the establishment of the christian religion, and continued for some ages; they bear no manner of proportion to them, neither for the nature, nor number, nor circumstances of them, so as to shake or weaken any man's belief of the christian religion, which had so much a greater confirmation given to it; especially when our Saviour did foretel, that false prophets should do some things of this kind. For after a religion is established by plain and unquestionable miracles, such as for their number, nature, publickness, and continuance, and all imaginable circumstances of advantage, were never upon any occasion wrought in the world, I say, after this, it is not reasonable, that one or two single miracles or wonders pretended to, or really wrought by a false prophet, should bring in question the truth of a religion confirmed by a long series of the greatest and most unquestionable miracles.

Besides that the doctrine of it is such as is worthy of God, and most likely to proceed from him*.

As for the miracles pretended to by the church of *Rome*, they are generally so fantastical and ridiculous, and so unlike the works of God, and wrought to no end and purpose, not among unbelievers for their conviction, which was always the great end of miracles, but among themselves, and so destitute of credit, that the wisest among themselves, are so far from believing them, that they are heartily ashamed of them, so that we need not trouble ourselves about them, for they are not likely to give any great confirmation to any doctrine, which stand in so much need of confirmation themselves.

* See of this more at large in the 3 last foregoing Sermons.

III. Besides the goodness of the doctrines which are from God, and the external confirmation of them by miracles, which is a great advantage to the reception of them, the Spirit of God doth likewise illuminate good men, and those who are desirous to know the truth, and hath promised to lead them into it, and to assist them in discerning between truth and falsehood. So our Saviour hath assured us, *John vii. 17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* Besides that the doctrines which are from God do commonly carry the marks and characters of their own divinity upon them, the providence of God is likewise particularly concerned, that good men, and those who are of honest minds, and sincerely desirous to know the truth, should not be deceived in matters of so great consequence to the happiness and salvation of mankind. To the same purpose is that promise, *John xiv. 21. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my father, and I will love him; and will manifest myself to him.*

God is always ready to reveal his will to those who are sincerely desirous to do it, and will not suffer men of honest minds to err dangerously in matters wherein their eternal salvation is concerned.

Thus you see what advantage the spirit of truth hath above the spirit of error and seduction; that divine truth carries greater evidence along with it, both in respect of the goodness of the doctrines which are *from God*, and the great confirmation that is given to them, and the extraordinary illuminations of God's Spirit, which is wont to accompany the truths of God to the minds of good men, who are ready and disposed to give entertainment to divine truth.

I should now have proceeded to the *second* advantage, which the spirit of truth hath above the spirit of seduction, namely, that the motives to persuade men to ad-

here to truth and holiness; are more powerful and operative upon the minds of men, than the motives to the contrary.

And then *Thirdly*, That those who embrace and obey the truth of God, have a greater assistance, and are acted by a more powerful spirit and principle, than any is in the world: and this seems to be more especially the meaning of that in the text, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* But these I shall not now enter upon.

S E R M O N CLXXIX.

The Advantages of Truth, in Opposition to Error.

I JOHN iv. 4, 5.

Ye are of God, little Children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

*The second
Sermon on
this Text.*

I Proceed to the *second* advantage which the spirit of truth hath above the spirit of error and seduction, namely, that the motives which good men have to persuade them to adhere to truth and holiness are more powerful, than the motives to the contrary. They who embraced the christian religion did firmly believe the eternal rewards and punishments of another world; and this principle of faith being fixed and rooted in them, made them victorious over all the temptations of the world, over all the allurements and terrors of it; because they were fully persuaded of the happiness and misery of another world; the happiness of those who continued steadfast in the faith and obedience of the gospel, and the dreadful misery and punishment of those who disobeyed the gospel of Christ, or apostatized from the profession of it. Hence it was that they were not to be moved by any temporal considerations, either of ease or advantage, or of trouble and persecution in this world. Their eternal interest lay so near their hearts, and they were so fully possess'd with the belief of the everlasting rewards and punishments of another life, that they overlooked the goods and evils of this life; and all temporal considerations, put into the scales against their everlasting interest, were of no weight and moment with them.

And this our apostle very particularly insists upon in this epistle, *Ch. v. 4, 5. Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;* the children of God are victorious over the temptations of the world, and then he tells us what it is that makes them so, *and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* The believing that *Jesus is the Son of God*, infers the belief of his doctrine, and consequently of that eminent part of it, the eternal recompence of another world, which whosoever firmly believes, will be able to resist and overcome all the temptations of this world. For by the belief of the christian religion, and faith in the Son of God, we are fully assured of the reality and certainty of the mighty rewards and punishments of another world, tho' they be future and at a distance; and a firm persuasion of these things, makes them in some sort present to us as to their efficacy and operation; for to a wise and considerate man, a great good or a great evil, which he believes will certainly befall him, according as he manageth his affairs well or ill, though it be at some distance, is of greater force than
a far

a far lesser good or evil which is present and nearer at hand. And of this we see many instances in the temporal concerns of men. A prudent man will forego his present ease and pleasure, and part with a present advantage, lay down ready money, upon the certain prospect of a far greater benefit that will come to him some years hence; and will undergo present pain and trouble, to prevent a far greater mischief and inconvenience; and upon this principle of the belief of future good and evil, all the great affairs of the world are managed. Upon this principle men plow and sow, and venture their estates in traffick to foreign parts, and trust out their present stock, and purchase reversions, and take physick, and cut off a limb, and run all those hazards of estate and life, which we see men every day do; and all this for the securing of some great advantage, or the preventing of some great mischief, which though it be future and at a distance, yet they probably or certainly foresee will happen to them.

And this principle is so much the stronger, and of greater force and efficacy, in matters of greater moment and importance, where the good hoped for, or the evil feared, is infinitely great, and concerns us for ever. If we firmly believe the reality and certainty of it, no temporal advantage or affliction can come in competition with them, in the calculation and account of a wise man; because there is no proportion between finite and infinite, between the goods and evils which are *temporal*, and those which are *eternal*; though the one be *seen*, and the other *not seen*; though the one be *present* and *near* to us, and the other *future*, and at a *great distance*.

Upon this principle the first christians continued firm and stedfast in the belief and obedience of the gospel, and were bold and open in the profession of it, notwithstanding all the cruel assaults of persecution, though they hazarded the loss of all that was dear to them in this world, and exposed themselves to the suffering of whatever is grievous and terrible to flesh and blood. They *gloried in tribulation*; and did not only patiently submit to the greatest sufferings, but heartily praised God, who *accounted them worthy to suffer for his name: they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven, they had a better and more enduring substance; they were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection*; and when they were harassed with all the evils and calamities of human life, yet they *fainted not*, knowing that *their light affliction which was but for a moment, would work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, having their minds fixed, *not upon the things which are seen, but upon the things which are not seen; the things which are seen being but temporal, but the things which are not seen being eternal*.

Thus they overcame the world, not by the force and power of this world, but by the belief of another world, and of the mighty rewards and punishments of it. And this *faith purified their hearts*, and reformed their lives, and made them *stedfast and unmoveable* in their holy profession, and raised their minds above all the temptations and terrors of present and sensible things.

Let us now see on the contrary what kind of motives and arguments false teachers use to seduce men to their pernicious ways. They *speak from the world*, and commonly make use of base, and low, and temporal considerations, of little tricks and devices, and *all deceivableness of unrighteousness* (as the scripture calls it) to make disciples and gain proselytes. They terrify them with temporal dangers and inconveniencies, and represent to them suffering, and persecution, and death in all their frightful shapes, to deter them from profession of the true religion: they set before them all manner of worldly baits and allurements, ease, and wealth, and preferment; they promise them liberty from the strictness of those laws and rules which religion ties them up to. By these arts and arguments the *Gnosticks* of old used to tempt men from christianity to shake their constancy in the profession of it; and the same ways are still put in practice by seducers at this day: they tell men of a glorious church that hath great power and interest in the world; they amuse them with a great deal of outward pomp and ceremony; they promise them preferment and great worldly advantages, by coming over to them; they threaten them with fire and faggot, with persecutions and massacres, and

where they have power, they hold them fast when they have gained them, by the terror of an inquisition; they promise them liberty, and what by the looseness of their casuistical divinity, and by the easiness of their penances and absolutions, and the cheats of their indulgencies, they have devised ways to reconcile almost the worst life that any man can lead, with fair hopes of getting to heaven at last. They tell them indeed, they must make some stop in purgatory: but they have so many ways to release men from those sufferings, as do very much abate the terror of them, to any man that hath but credulity enough to believe them: for besides the vast treasure of merits in the common bank of the church, which the Pope hath in his disposal, and which no body ought to doubt but that they are faithfully employed by him for the ease and deliverance of souls in purgatory; I say, besides these, there are so many particular ways of effecting this business, that a man of ordinary discretion, with an indifferent purse, may so order the matter, that he shall only pass through purgatory, but need not make any stay in *that place of torments*.

But tho' these be their common motives and inducements to draw men to their communion, yet they do not wholly omit the arguments taken from the eternal happiness and misery of men in another world; for to give them their due, there are no people in the world more prodigal of eternal salvation and damnation: they promise the one upon the easiest terms, and threaten the other upon the least displeasure: if a man be in their communion, he can hardly fail of salvation; and if he be out of it, and differ from them in the least point of faith, though but of their own making, he is sure to be damned, though he had the graces and virtues, the sanctity and charity of an angel: and this is the true reason why these arguments, which are so powerful in themselves, signify so little from their mouths; because every man that hath read the bible and understands the christian religion, plainly sees that they have made terms of salvation and damnation quite different from those which God hath constituted; so that these motives, which are so strong and mighty in themselves, quite lose their edge and force, when they are managed by seducers in so undue a manner, and to ends and purposes so cross to the main design of christianity. This is the *second* advantage which the spirit of truth hath above the spirit of error and seduction, that the motives to persuade men to adhere to truth and holiness, are really in themselves more powerful than the motives to error and seduction.

Thirdly, Those who sincerely embrace and obey the truth of God, have a greater assistance, and are acted by a more powerful spirit and principle, than that which is in the world; and this seems more especially to be the meaning of the reason here given in the text, why the spirit of truth is victorious over the spirit of error and seduction; *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he, that is in you, than he that is in the world*; that is, the spirit which is in good men, is more powerful than the Devil. that evil spirit which inspires and acts the *children of disobedience*.

For the farther explication of this, I will do these *three* things.

I. Shew that there are these two principles in the world, the Spirit of God, and the Devil, very active and powerful in good and bad men.

II. That the Spirit of God, which is in good men, is greater than he that is in the world.

III. In what ways the Spirit of God doth move and assist good men.

I. That there are these two principles in the world, the Spirit of God, and the Devil, very active and powerful, the one in good, the other in bad men. This is very credible in the general, from the universal tradition and consent of mankind, in the belief of good and evil spirits attending men, and prompting them to good and evil: but we who embrace the revelation of the gospel have a much firmer and surer ground for it, nothing being more plain and frequent in scripture, than that the holy Spirit of God guides and assists good men in doing the will of God; and that the Devil *works in the children of disobedience*, and is always ready to tempt men to, and promote any evil action or design. From hence it is, that the scripture does almost every where ascribe all good motions and actions to the operation and influence of God's grace and holy Spirit upon the

the minds of men; and the sins of men to the temptation and suggestion of the Devil; and this is so well known to any one conversant in the holy scriptures, that I need not cite particular texts for the proof of it.

'Tis true indeed, that the motions of God's holy Spirit, and the suggestions of the Devil, are very secret to us, and imperceptible by us, so that no man can say certainly, that this good inclination or action is an immediate motion of God's holy Spirit in me, or that evil thought and design is an immediate suggestion of the Devil; it is sufficient for us, that we are assured from divine revelation in general, that the Spirit of God very frequently does, and is always ready to assist good men in the doing or suffering of God's will; as the evil Spirit, where God permits him, is always busy to tempt and seduce men to evil. And this ought not to be strange to us, because our Saviour hath expressly told us, that the Spirit of God works in men after an imperceptible manner, *Job. iii. 8. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Though we do not know the manner of the Spirit's working, nor perceive the operations of it upon our minds, yet we find the effects of it in the renovation and sanctification of our hearts. Thus by undeniable arguments, men are assured of a divine providence governing the world, though men do not always see, nor can make out to others, the particular interpositions of it, so as to say that this or that was an immediate effect of divine providence. To know certainly that a thing *is*, it is not necessary that we should be able to give a particular account of all its operations, and the manner of them; these may be hidden from us, and yet we may be sufficiently assured by other arguments that there is such a thing. Men are sure they have souls, though they can give no account how the actions of understanding, and remembrance, and sensation are produced by them: So it is in the present case, we are sufficiently assured from the word of God, that good and bad Spirits have a great influence upon the minds of men, though we be not conscious to their operations, and the manner of them.

II. The Spirit of God which is in good men, is greater than he that is in the world; he is more able and ready to assist men to good purposes, than the Devil is to tempt and help forward that which is evil. And this will appear, if we consider these *three* things.

1. The Spirit of God is more powerful than the Devil; and this is so evident in itself that it needs no proof.

2. The Spirit of God is as forward and willing to assist men to good purposes, as the Devil is to the contrary. That extremity of malice and envy, which is in evil Spirits, does no doubt make them very forward and active to do all the mischief they can to mankind, by tempting and seducing them to sin: But on the other hand, the utmost perfection of goodness which in God is more and greater than the malice of the Devil, will incline more strongly the holy Spirit of God to pity and aid, and help good men, than the malice of the Devil can urge him to procure the harm and mischief of mankind; and if we could suppose their will and inclinations equal; yet our comfort is, their power is not.

3. The Spirit of God hath a more free and immediate access to the minds of good men, and a more intimate conjunction with, and operation upon them, than the Devil. The Spirit of God is always present to us, and willing to dwell and abide in us, and ready to help and assist us, if we be ready to obey his dictates, and comply with his holy and blessed motions; if we did not resist, and quench, and grieve him, he would always take up his abode and habitation in us, and would be continually exciting, and guiding, and assisting us to that which is good; he knows our hearts, and sees all the secrets of our souls; knows all our inclinations, knows our weakness and our danger, what assistance we want, and when it will be most seasonable; and is as intimate to us, and as conscious to all the motions of our spirits, as we ourselves are.

But now the Devil is under great restraint, and cannot make nearer approaches to any man than God permits him; he does not know our hearts, nor can pry into the secret of our thoughts. God *knows*, but the Devil does but *guess* at the thoughts, and designs, and inclinations of men; he hath no power over us, nor
any

any access to us, but what we give him, or God permits. By obedience to God's will, and resisting the temptations of the Devil to sin and disobedience, we may not only keep out the Devil, but keep him at a great distance, and make him *flee from us*, so that we shall have little trouble or molestation from him; for though he be unwearied in his malicious attempts to ruin our souls, yet because he cannot be every where, he haunts those most where he hath the greatest hopes of success; and is too eager and intent upon mischief to employ his time and temptations where he hath been often foiled, and hath reason to despair of victory. So that if all things be considered, it is our own fault if we want the assistance of God's holy Spirit, or if the Devil have any great power over us: for God does not usually, but upon great provocation, take away his holy Spirit from men, and lay them open to the assaults and temptations of the Devil. If any be *led captive by the Devil at his pleasure*, it is those who have wilfully forsaken God, and *sold themselves to do wickedly*.

III. We will consider in what ways the Spirit of God doth move and assist good men. These *two* ways,

1. By exciting good motions in us, and enabling us to bring them to effect.
2. By supporting us under persecution for religion.

1. By exciting good motions in us, and enabling us to bring them to effect. These the apostle puts together, *Phil. ii. 13. For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure*. It is he that stirs up good inclinations in us, and carries them on to effect. And this he makes an argument why we should be diligent and industrious in the work of our salvation, because God is so ready to assist us; *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure*.

2. By supporting us under persecution for religion. In case of extraordinary temptations, and violent assaults upon our constancy in religion, by fierce and cruel persecutions, God affords immediate and extraordinary supports to good men, whereby they are many times born up under the greatest sufferings, not only with patience, but with comfort and *joy unspeakable and full of glory*. Wherever God suffers good men to be tempted above humanity, he affords them an immediate divine assistance, to bear them up, and make them victorious. So St. Peter tells us, *1 Pet. iv. 14. That those who suffer and are reproached for the name of Christ, the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them*. So likewise St. Paul, *1 Cor. x. 13. speaking of those who had not yet been set upon by any sharp persecution, No persecution hath taken you, but such as is common to man, εἰ μὴ ἀνθρώπινον*, nothing but what is human, what the spirit of man may bear: but if such a case happen, of temptation above nature, and the spirit of a man be too weak to support itself under it, God will in that case afford men immediate and extraordinary supports and comforts, *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it*; and then it immediately follows, *Wherefore my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry*; because God hath promised such an extraordinary assistance, in case of persecution for religion; therefore he encourageth them to continue steadfast in the profession of christianity, and cautions them against apostasy to the heathen idolatry.

The inference from all this discourse, is to encourage us to continue steadfast in the truth, and in the practice of our holy religion, *to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*, and not to suffer our selves to be shaken with every wind of doctrine, by the arts and cunning of those who lie in wait to deceive; who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, and led away by divers lusts. You see what kind of persons these false teachers used to profelyte; women of no virtue, of a prostituted reputation, *laden with sins, and led away with divers lusts*; a character that notoriously agrees to some seducers of our times.

Therefore let us *continue in the things which we have heard*, and not suffer ourselves to be moved from our *steadfastness*. The more we consider our religion, and compare

compare it with the unquestionable revelation of God in the holy scriptures, the greater reason we shall see to adhere to it. The doctrines of our religion are of God, plainly contained in his word, and such as are worthy of him, and likely to proceed from him, and tend to the good and happiness of mankind, to make men really better, and to qualify them for that happiness which God hath promised to holy souls. The doctrines of our religion are free from the suspicions of a worldly interest and design. But if we consider the doctrines and innovations of that church which pretends to be the only christian catholick society in the world, we shall find that they are of another stamp, and of a quite contrary tendency, that they savour so rankly of a worldly interest, that any impartial man would at first sight judge them to be the contrivances of worldly, covetous, and ambitious men, and that they did not look like divine truths, and doctrines that are of God, but that they are of the world, and therefore they that propagate them, and would seduce men to them, *Speak from the world, and the world heareth them.*

S E R M O N CLXXX.

The Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion; with the Cause, and Danger of Infidelity.

2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

I SHALL explain these words, and then proceed to handle many things contained in them.

If our gospel be hid, or veiled; so by this metaphor the apostle alludes to what he had said in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, concerning the veil which was upon Moses his face, and upon the hearts of the Jews, so that they could not see to the end of that dispensation. There was a great deal of obscurity in that administration: But the veil is done away in Christ. The gospel is a clear revelation, and sufficiently conspicuous in itself: and now, if it be hid from any, the fault is not in the obscurity of the object, but in the blindness of men's minds.

If the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. To them that deserve to perish, because they will not see.

In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. Some of the fathers, as St. Aug. and St. Chrysost. and several of the Greek scholiasts, read these words otherwise; In whom God hath blinded the eyes of the men of this world who believe not; and so refer this blindness to God's permission; in which sense he is said elsewhere in scripture, to harden mens hearts. The reason why they chuse this reading of the words rather than the other, was in opposition to the Marcionites and Manichees; the former of which sects made use of this text to countenance their opinion of two Gods; the one of the old testament, whom they called the just God; the other of the new, whom they styled the good God: the former of these say they, made the world, and is therefore here called the God of this world. The Manichees made use of this text to prove that the Devil, whom they made the principle of all evil and imperfection, was the maker of this world, and is therefore called the God of it.

But

*The first
Sermon on
this Text.*

But there is no need why for this reason we should depart from the usual reading of the words; for there is nothing in the true importance of them, that can give countenance to these errors. For the Devil, though he did not make this world, may be said to be *the God of it*, upon a very good account, because the greatest part of the world being sunk into idolatry and wickedness, were become his lot and portion, who worshipped him as God, and did his works, and therefore were part of his dominion. So St John tells us, 1 Joh. 3. 8. *He that committeth sin is of the devil*; and Chap. v. 19. *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness*, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται which may be render'd more agreeably to the opposition which the apostle intended, *is subject to the Evil one*, is in his power, and under his dominion. According to which Plutarch tells us, that every unreasonable and brutish nature belongs to the lot of bad spirits. So that in this sense the Devil may very well be said to be *the God of this world*, as he is elsewhere called by our Saviour, *the prince of this world*, Joh. xii. 31. *Now shall the prince of this world be cast out*; and Joh. xiv. 30. *The prince of this world cometh*. And so the apostle, Eph. vi. 12. *The ruler of the darkness of this world*.

Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάζειν, *lest they should see, or behold the light of the glorious gospel*, for so Hesych. tells us, that αὐγάζω αὐγάζομαι is ὁρᾶν καὶ ἐλέπναι. It is called *the glorious gospel of Christ*, because of the glorious confirmation that was given to it by his miraculous resurrection and ascension, and his sending the Holy Ghost into the world; and Christ is said to be *the image of God*, because the power of the deity did shew forth itself in the miracles which he wrought.

The words being thus explained, the most material things that offer themselves to our consideration in them, are these three.

First, The full and clear evidence which we have of the truth of the gospel, or of the christian religion, which the apostle expresseth to us in these words, *the light of the glorious gospel of Christ*.

Secondly, The cause of infidelity, notwithstanding all the evidence which the gospel carries along with it, which the apostle expresseth in these words, *in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not*.

Thirdly, The dangerous state of those, who having the gospel propounded to them, do not believe it. The apostle tells them, that they are *lost and undone*. *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that perish*.

I begin with the *first* of these, namely, the full and clear evidence which we have of the truth of the gospel or christian religion. The only thing that can give us full assurance that any religion is true, is, if we can be satisfied, that it is from God; for being once satisfied of that, there can remain no doubt of the truth of any thing that comes from him, it being an essential part of the notion which every man hath of God, that he is *a God of truth*.

Now there are *two* things must concur to give the mind of man full satisfaction that any religion is from God.

First, If the person that declares this religion give testimony of his divine authority, that is, that he is sent and commissioned by God to that purpose. And,

Secondly, If the religion which he declares contain nothing in it, that is plainly repugnant to the nature of God. I say these *two* must concur; for though I could suppose a person to bring the highest testimony imaginable of his divine mission and authority, suppose he should work a miracle for the confirmation of his doctrine; yet if there were any thing in the doctrine plainly repugnant to the natural notions which I have of God, I could not receive it as from God; the reason of which is plainly this, I can have no assurance that that is from God, which if it were true, I should be uncertain whether there was a God or not. I cannot possibly have any greater assurance that any thing is from God, than I have that there is a God; and I have no greater assurance that there is a God, than I have of his essential perfections, as that he is good, and powerful, and wise, and just, &c. For by the very same arguments that I come to know that there is a God, I know likewise that he must necessarily have these perfections. So that if any

thing should be offered to me as a revelation from God, which plainly contradicts those natural notions which I have of him, I must necessarily reject it, yea though it were back'd with a miracle; because no man can at the same time believe that there is a God of such and such perfections, and entertain any thing as from him, which evidently contradicts those perfections. And as this is reasonable in it self, so it is clear from scripture. *Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign, or a wonder: and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them: Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet.* Here is the very case put, which I am speaking of; a prophet comes and preacheth the worship of idols, as the sun, moon, stars, &c. and for the confirmation of this he is supposed to work a miracle; and yet notwithstanding this, we are forbid to hearken to him, because the doctrine that he brings does evidently contradict the natural notions which I have of God.

From all which it appears, that these two things must concur, to give us full satisfaction that any religion is from God, namely, *first*, That the person that declares this religion, gives testimony of his divine authority, that he is sent and commissioned from God to that purpose. And,

Secondly, That the religion which he declares contains nothing in it that is plainly repugnant to the nature of God.

Now to bring this to my present purpose, I should shew these two things concerning the christian religion.

First, As to the divine authority of the person that declares this religion to the world, that he was sent and commissioned by God to that purpose.

Secondly, As to the religion itself, that there is nothing in it that is repugnant to the nature of God. I intend chiefly to speak of the *first* of these: For I dare say, any one that will freely and without prejudice consider the christian religion, as it is laid down in the scriptures, and not as it hath been abused by the wanton wits of some, and the designs of others, will find nothing in it but what is very suitable to the nature of God, and worthy of him: he shall find nothing in the propositions of faith, but what is suitable to the perfections of the divine nature, and hath a proper influence upon a godly practice; nothing in the precepts of life, but what plainly tends to the perfection of human nature, and the advantage and happiness of mankind; nothing in the arguments and motives to obedience, as namely, the love of Christ in dying for us, the assistance of God's holy Spirit, and the rewards and punishments of another world, but what is very accommodate to our nature, and suitable to the wisdom, and goodness, and justice of God: and these *three*, the propositions of faith, the precepts of life, the arguments and motives to obedience, do constitute the christian religion, and make up the whole gospel. Concerning most of these, I have elsewhere treated at large; therefore I shall now apply myself chiefly to the *first* thing, namely, to shew that we have abundant satisfaction of the divine authority of the person that declares this religion to the world.

Now because we live at a great distance from the age wherein this revelation of the gospel by *Jesus Christ* was made to the world, it will be requisite for our clearer proceeding in this matter, to consider distinctly these *three* things.

First, what evidence those who heard this doctrine of the gospel immediately from our Saviour, had for his divine authority. And this enquiry only respects the disciples of our Saviour, and the rest of the *Jews* to whom he preached.

Secondly, What evidence those had who received this doctrine by the preaching of the apostles. And this concerns those to whom the gospel was published by the apostles after our Saviour's death.

Thirdly, What evidence after-ages, until the present time, have of this. And this properly concerns us, who live at a great distance from the times of the first publication of the gospel.

And according to these *three* differences of time, there are likewise but *three* ways whereby we can come to the knowledge of matter of fact; and they are all such as are capable of giving us sufficient assurance.

The *First* is by the testimony of our own senses ; and this was the advantage of those who heard our Saviour's doctrine, and saw his miracles.

The *Second* by the report and relation of credible eye and ear-witnesses ; and this advantage those had who heard the apostles.

The *third* by a constant and uncontroul'd relation derived down successively from one age to another, either by word or writing, or both ; which is the way whereby the ages since the apostles to this day, have had the christian religion derived down to them.

First, To consider what evidence those who heard the doctrine of the gospel immediately from our Saviour himself, might have of his divine authority. Now there are but *four* ways that I can at present imagine (setting aside an internal revelation in every man's mind) whereby men may be sufficiently satisfied of the divine authority of any person.

I. If it be prophesied of him, and foretold by persons divinely inspired, that God would send such an one as his messenger and prophet into the world, and afterward such a person comes, to whom all the circumstances of those prophecies do agree.

II. By the testimony of an immediate voice from heaven.

III. By a power of working miracles.

IV. By the gift of prophecy proved and made good by the accomplishment of his own predictions.

Now I shall shew that those who lived in our Saviour's time, and conversed with him, were capable of satisfaction concerning his divine authority all these *four* ways. I shall begin with the

I. They were capable of being eye-witnesses that Christ was the great prophet and messenger of God, the *Messias* prophesied of and foretold in the old testament. And here I do reasonably take for granted the divine authority of the old testament, and that the prophecies therein contained are of divine inspiration ; because those to whom our Saviour ordinarily preached, were only the *Jews*, who acknowledged the divine authority of those books ; and therefore the accomplishment of those Prophecies in the person of our Saviour, must needs be a satisfactory argument to them, that he was the *Messias* foretold.

Now to shew that the disciples of our Saviour, and the rest of the *Jews*, were capable of receiving full satisfaction in this, that *Jesus Christ* was the *Messias* prophesied of in the old testament, I shall proceed in these steps.

1. That the prophecies of the old testament fix a time for the coming of the *Messias* ; they give certain marks and signs whereby it may be known when the *Messias* would come ; as that he should come when the government should utterly be lost from *Judah*, *Gen. xlix. 10. The scepter shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come* ; by whom the ancient *Jews* did understand the *Messias* ; and nothing but plain malice against Christ, and the christian religion, makes the modern *Jews* to depart herein from the sense of their ancient masters. That he should come before the destruction of the second temple, *Hag. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory. saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts : and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.* From whence it is plain, that this house should remain when the desire of all nations, that is, the *Messias* (according to the interpretation of the ancient *Jews*) should come, and his presence should be the glory of this second temple, and make it excel the first. And much to the same purpose, *Mal. iii. 1. Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me : and the Lord, whom ye seek, (that is, the *Messias*,) shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in : Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.* That he should come at the end of so many weeks of years, from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build *Hierusalem*, and after so many weeks of years should be cut off, and after that

that *the city of Hierusalem and sanctuary should be destroyed and made desolate*, Dan. ix. 24, 25, 26, 27. So that you see the prophecies of the old testament do fix and ascertain the time of the *Messias* his coming, both by infallible marks and signs, concomitant and consequent, and by an exact computation of years.

2. That the time fixed by those prophecies for the coming of the *Messias* is already past. And this appears, in that all those marks and signs, which it was foretold should accompany and follow the coming of the *Messias*, are come to pass, and the time limited for the coming of the *Messias* is long since expired.

For (1.) The *sceptre* is long since *departed from Judah*. The *Jews* are now dispersed among all nations, their government lost, their families confounded, in so much that they do not at this day know those of the tribe of *Judah* from others. At the captivity, the government was not utterly lost, for they had a prince of the captivity; or at least it was interrupted but for seventy years, and then it was restored to them again: but now the *scepter* hath been *departed*, and the government lost for sixteen hundred years.

(2.) The second temple is destroyed, to which it was foretold, that *the desire of all nations should come*.

(3.) *The city* is destroyed and *made desolate*, which was foretold should be *after the cutting off of the Messias*.

(4.) The *seventy weeks of years* are *accomplished* and expired long since, which were to begin from *the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Hierusalem*, and to end at the coming of the *Messias the prince*. And whether we fix the beginning of these weeks in the first or second year of *Cyrus*, or in the reign of one of the *Darius's* or *Artaxerxes's* (for by universal consent it must begin in some of them) it matters not to my present purpose: for wherever it be fixed, these weeks are long since expired.

3. And consequently the *Messias* is already come. For if the predictions of the old testament be true, which limit his coming to a certain time, which is fixed both by infallible marks, and by an account of years, I say, if these predictions be true, that he should come at such a time, and that time is past, then he is already come.

The *Jews* seek to evade the force of this argument by this pitiful shift, that the promises and predictions of the *Messias* were not absolute, but conditional; that is, he should come at such a time, if the sins and impenitency of men did not hinder. To this I answer,

(1.) This grants that the time for the coming of the *Messias* is past.

(2.) The reason that they give why God hath deferred the accomplishment of those prophecies and promises, is, because of the impenitency and wickedness of the people of the *Jews* at that time; which will agree very well with the history of the gospel, and give us a very good account how they came to reject the *Messias*; because they were so wicked, and their unbelief and impenitency was so great at that time.

(3.) There is no such condition any where expressed in any of those prophecies.

(4.) It is unreasonable that there should be such a condition; that the impenitency of men should hinder the coming of him, who was to bring the world to repentance, that is, to do that on his part which is sufficient to that end.

(5.) Nothing could bring the veracity of God into question more, than to make such predictions conditional, as by the concurrent testimony of so many prophets have the time of their accomplishment so punctually defined, and have not either a condition expressly fixed to them, or in the nature of the thing necessarily implied: and if this were not so, any one might pretend to be a true prophet, tho' the event proved never so contrary to his prediction.

(6.) It appears out of the books of the *Jews* to have been a constant tradition among them, that the *Messias* should come when the state of the people was most degenerate, and there was the greatest corruption and dissolution of manners among them. And if this be so, then their wickedness and impenitency could be no obstacle and impediment to the fulfilling of the promises and predictions, concerning the *Messias*.

I should have added in the next place, that the prophecies and promises in the old testament concerning the *Messias*, do all exactly, both as to the time, and all other circumstances, agree to *Jesus Christ*, who was born at *Bethlehem*, who gave himself out to be the *Messias*, and whom we christians own to be so. But this I reserve for the next opportunity.

S E R M O N C L X X X I .

The Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

2 C O R. iv. 3, 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

*The second
Sermon on
this Text.*

I N discoursing on these words, I have begun to shew, how those who heard the doctrine of the gospel immediately from our Saviour, might be satisfied concerning his divine authority; and I mentioned *four* ways by which such persons might receive full satisfaction.

I. By the agreement of the prophecies and promises of the old testament to our Saviour.

II. By the testimony of an immediate voice from heaven.

III. By the power of working miracles.

IV. By the gift of prophecy, proved and made good by the accomplishment of his own predictions.

In discoursing of the *first* of these, I proceeded by these steps.

1. That the prophecies of the old testament did fix a time for the coming of the *Messias*, and gave certain marks and signs whereby it might be known when the *Messias* would come.

2. That the time fixed by those prophecies for the coming of the *Messias* is already past.

3. And consequently, that the *Messias* is already come. Thus far I have gone; and now add,

4. The prophecies and promises of the old testament concerning the *Messias*, do all exactly, both as to the time and all other circumstances, agree to *Jesus Christ* that was born at *Bethlehem*, who gave himself out to be the *Messias*, and whom we christians own to be so.

1. The time specified in those predictions agree to him. When he came into world, the government was departed from *Judah*; for they were then in subjection to the *Romans*; and *Herod* their king, who was put into the government by the *Romans*, was an *Idumæan*. He came into the second temple, which, notwithstanding its being re-edified by *Herod*, might justly be accounted the same, it not having been again destroyed by any enemy, but only pulled down in order to the beautifying and enlarging of it; notwithstanding which *Josephus* every where calls it the same temple; for he reckons but two temples, the one, that which *Solomon* built, which continued till the captivity of *Babylon*; the other that which *Zerubbabel* built, and that he says continued till the *Romans* destroyed *Hierusalem*. And not long after our Saviour's death, the city of *Hierusalem* and the sanctuary were utterly demolished, and *the end thereof was with a flood*;

a flood ; there was a total devastation of them ; which plainly shews the seventy weeks did also expire about that time, wherever we fix the beginning of them ; because the prophecy of *Daniel* tells us plainly, that towards the expiration of them, *the city and the sanctuary were to be destroyed* ; which was fulfilled with a great deal of severity, as if there were some extraordinary cause of those fearful judgments which came upon them. And indeed we find, that after they had committed the great sin of *crucifying the Lord of life*, they gave up themselves to all manner of wickedness, *filling up the measure of their sins, that wrath might come upon them to the uttermost* ; insomuch that *Josephus* tells us, “ That he did verily believe, that if the *Romans* had not come at that time to destroy them, either “ the earth would have swallowed up their city, or a flood have overwhelmed, “ or thunder and lightning, or fire from heaven, would have consumed them, “ like *Sodom and Gomorrah* ; for, says he, this generation was much more wicked “ than they were.”

And which is a very considerable argument to the *Jews*, he came at the time when their whole nation were in expectation of the *Messias* ; and indeed the whole world were about that time in expectation of a prince out of *Judæa*. That the *Jews* did expect the *Messias* about this time, appears by the famous saying of one of their greatest Rabbies, *Elias*, that there should be 2000 years before the law, 2000 years the law should last, and 2000 years should be the time of the *Messias* : and according to the most exact chronology, it was much about the 4000th year of the world that *Christ* was born. That a great part of the world besides, were at that time in expectation of a prince to spring out of *Judæa*, appears from those known testimonies of *Suetonius* and *Tacitus*. *Percrebuerat toto oriente vetus & constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut Judæa profecti rerum potirentur*, saith *Suetonius* ; and *Tacitus* to the same purpose. Both agree in the words of this prophecy, which seem to be taken out of the prophecy of *Micah*, speaking of *Bethlehem, in the land of Judæa* ; *Out of thee shall come a governor*. And *Suetonius* tells us farther, That the belief and expectation of this among the *Jews* was so great at that time, that this was the cause of their rebelling against the *Romans*. A just judgment of God upon them, that those who had rejected the true *Messias*, should be deluded to their own ruin by the hopes of a false one.

2. All other circumstances of those promises and prophecies, are exactly answered in the history and relation which the gospel gives of him. He was emphatically *the seed of the woman*, according to the first and very obscure promise made to our first parents, *Gen. iii. 15. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head* : I say he was emphatically *the seed of the woman*, being, as our books of the gospel tell us, born of a pure virgin, which never knew man. He was *the seed of Abraham*, according to the second promise of him made to *Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed*. He was *a prophet like unto Moses*, being a great worker of Miracles above any of the prophets, as *Moses* also was ; and by whom God gave a new law, as he did by *Moses*, according to the other famous promise of him, *Deut. xviii. 15. A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me*.

He was of the tribe of *Judah*, and of the seed of *David*, as it was foretold the *Messias* should be ; therefore he is called in the gospel, *the Son of David* ; and the apostle to the *Hebrews*, chap. vii. 14. appeals to the *Jews* concerning this, as a thing clear and acknowledged among them, *It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah*, which he would not have affirmed to the *Jews* without proof, if it had not been granted by them.

For the other, that he was of the seed of *David*, the *Jews* will by no means admit as a thing at all evident from the history of the gospel concerning him : for say they, if that appear any where, we should find it in his genealogy, but there we find no such matter ; there indeed we have the genealogy of *Joseph* very differently related by the two evangelists, *Matthew* and *Luke* ; but what is this to the genealogy of *Christ*, when the christians themselves avowedly declare, that *Joseph* was not his father ? It is granted that *Joseph* was of *David's* line ; but to prove that

that *Christ* was really descended from *David*, instead of the genealogy of *Joseph*, they should have shewn *Mary's*.

This is a very malicious and spiteful objection, and the *Jews* insist very much upon it: but yet I think it is capable of a very satisfactory answer, in which I shall proceed by these steps.

(1.) We will grant that both the genealogies of our Saviour, that in *Matthew*, and that in *Luke*, are intended to shew that *Joseph* was of *Abraham's* and *David's* line, and that neither of them are the genealogy of *Mary*. Some indeed have thought so, but it seems to me with very little probability: I incline much rather to *Grotius* his excellent conjecture about it, that *Matthew's* genealogy gives us an account of the succession of the royal family down as low as *Joseph*, and that in *St. Luke* the direct series of *Joseph's* ancestors.

(2.) The *Jews* grant that it hath been an ancient tradition among christians, that *Joseph* and *Mary* were of the same family, and that *Mary* was *Virgo* ἄνδρῳ, one that had no brethren, an heiress, or co-heiress, and so according to the *Jewish* custom she was bound to marry in her family; which the *Jews* were especially careful of in the family of *David*, to preserve the succession of the royal line, of which the *Messias* was to come.

(3.) The *Jews* have nothing to object against this which shews it improbable.

(4.) If so, that they were of the same family, then the genealogy of *Joseph*, though not directly and expressly, yet by consequence was the genealogy of *Mary*; and consequently those genealogies in the gospel do sufficiently shew that *Christ* was the son of *David*.

(5.) It cannot be imagined that the evangelists should have omitted the genealogy of *Mary*, if it had not been included in that of *Joseph*, especially *St. Matthew*, who in his genealogy expressly tells us, that he intended to shew that he was the son of *David*, and also denies *Joseph* to have been his real father.

(6.) If there had been any question, whether *Mary* was of the line of *David*, the *Jews* would certainly in that time have rejected him from being the *Messias*, upon that very account; nothing being more plausible for them to have said than this, That he pretended to have no father, and to be born of a virgin, who was not of the line of *David*, how could he then be the *Messias*, who was to be of the seed of *David*? But that he was always owned by the *Jews* to be of that seed, appears by the title so frequently given to him of the son of *David*.

It was prophesied that the *Messias* should be born in *Bethlehem of Judæa*. *Mic. v. 2.* which you find accordingly fulfilled, *Matt. ii. 6.* the providence of God so ordering it, that *Augustus* should then lay a general tax, which occasion brought up *Joseph* and *Mary* to *Bethlehem*; not only that she might be delivered there, but that their names being there entered, their family might be ascertained, and there might no doubt afterward arise, but that they were of the line of *David*.

It was foretold he should be born of a virgin, *Isa. vii. 14.* which you see accordingly fulfilled, *Matth. i.* That this is not the primary, but the mystical sense, of that place in *Isaiah*, I think may without prejudice be granted to the *Jews*, who in innumerable places of the old testament, do, besides the first and literal sense, allow of a mystical one; and if it be objected that this is only the saying of us christians, that *Christ* was born of a pure virgin; to them it is easily answered, That if this be foretold of the *Messias*, whoever he be, that he shall be born of a virgin, as the *Jews* generally grant, we have as much assurance of this, as they can have, or imagine to have of theirs, whenever he should come. For it is not any report or tradition that can give credit to so strange a thing, but the unquestionable miracles which he wrought, which prove him to come from God, and consequently to be no impostor, but to be all that he pretended he was.

It was foretold of him that he should be a great prophet and teacher, *Deut. xviii. 15.* A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me. *Isa. lxi. 1.* The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, &c. *Ezek. xxxiv. 23.* And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant *David*; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd,

berd. And chap xxxvii. ver. 24. *And David my servant shall be king over them, and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.* And this was eminently fulfilled in that he foretold several future contingents; as his own crucifixion, Peter's denial of him; the destruction of Hierusalem, the rising of false christs, and false prophets, (which I shall particularly consider hereafter) the descending of the Holy Ghost, and the admirable success of the gospel in the world; in that he preached so pure and perfect a doctrine to the world, and with so much authority; a doctrine so excellent and reasonable, so suitable to the necessities, and agreeable to the reason of mankind; a doctrine which tendeth so much to the perfecting of human nature, and to the peace and happiness of human society, above any other institution in the world.

It was foretold that he should do many and great miracles, and such as should be beneficial to men, *Isa. xxxv. 5, 6. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.* And was not all this eminently accomplished in Jesus Christ? What greater, or more publick, or more frequent and numerous, or more beneficial miracles, can almost be imagined, than Christ did? So that we may say to the Jews, as some of them did to the Pharisees in our Saviour's time, *You talk of a Messias to come; yet when he is come, will he do greater works than this man hath done?*

It was foretold of him, that the people should receive him with joy and triumph when *He came riding upon an ass to Hierusalem, Zach. ix. 9.* which we find fulfilled, *Matth. xxi.*

It was prophesied that he should suffer many things, and be rejected, and despised of men, *Psal. xxii. 6. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. Isa. liii. 3. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* Which we find fulfilled all along in the history of the gospel.

It was prophesied that he should be sold for thirty pieces of silver, *Zach. xi. 12.* which we find fulfilled, *Matth. xxvii. 9.* That when he who was the shepherd was smitten, the sheep should be scattered, *Zach. xiii. 7.* which was accomplished, *Matth. xxvii. 56. All the disciples forsook him and fled.* That he should be scourged and buffeted, and spit upon, *Isa. l. 6. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting;* which you find punctually accomplished, *Matth. xxvii.*

It was foretold that he should die a violent death, *Isa. liii. 8. He was cut off out of the land of the living. Dan. ix. 26. Messias the prince shall be cut off.* That he should undergo all these sufferings with the greatest patience. *Isa. liii. 7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.* That he should suffer all these things not for himself, but for sinners, *Isa. liii. 5. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. And ver. 6. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. And ver. 8. For the transgression of my people was he stricken. And ver. 10. His soul was made an offering for sin. And ver. 12. He bare the sins of many. And Dan. ix. 26. it is said the Messias should be cut off, but not for himself.*

It was foretold, that his hands and feet should be pierced, *Psal. xxii. 16. He should be numbered with the transgressors, Isa. liii. 12.* And accordingly he was condemned as a malefactor, to suffer with malefactors, being crucified between two thieves.

It was foretold that he should have gall and vinegar given him to drink, *Psal. lxix. 21. that he should be derided in the midst of his sufferings, Psal. xxii. 7, 8. All they that see me, laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in*

in him. And this was most punctually accomplished, *Matth. xxvii. 39, 43.* And they that passed by, reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, he trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him.

It was foretold that he should cry out under his sufferings, *Psal. xxii. 1.* My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? That he should pray for his wicked persecutors, *Isa. liii. 12.* that he made intercession for the transgressors: and so he did most affectionately, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. That they should cast lots for his garment, *Psal. xxii. 18.* All, or most of which predictions, were by the ancient Jews, understood of the *Messias*, and were exactly fulfilled in *Jesus Christ*, as appears fully out of the history of the gospel.

And then for the circumstances of his burial. It was foretold, that he should make his grave with the rich, *Isa. liii. 9.* which was accomplished in that he was put into *Joseph of Arimathea's* own tomb.

His resurrection was foretold to be after three days, *Hos. vi. 2.* as several of the Rabbies understood that place; however, that he should rise again, may be plainly urged from these texts, where it is said, that his kingdom should have no end; and *Isa. liii. 10.* where it is said, that after his death, He shall see his seed, and prolong his days; and that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. But most expressly, *Psal. xvi. 10.* Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.

And his sitting at the right hand of God, which supposeth his ascension into heaven, *Psal. cx. 1.* Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

The wonderful success of the gospel, and the universal spreading of it through the world, was foretold, *Gen. xii. 3.* In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; which implies, that the blessing of the gospel, which the *Messias* brought to the world, should be universally diffused. *Gen. xlix. 10.* To him shall the gathering of the people be. *Psal. ii. 8.* God promiseth there, to give Christ the Heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession. Besides several other places of the psalms and prophets, too many to be reckoned up.

Now the accomplishment of all these prophecies happened in their days who saw our Saviour, and conversed with him; so that they were capable of receiving full satisfaction concerning his divine authority, and that he was a person sent of God to teach the world, and assure them that he was the *Messias*, foretold and prophesied of in the books of the old testament, which being by them received as of divine inspiration, did consequently assure them that he was from God.

II. The second way whereby we may be satisfied concerning the divine authority of a person, is by the testimony of an immediate voice from heaven; and this testimony Christ had twice given to him: the first publicly before a great assembly of people at *John's* baptism, which was just before he began his publick ministry, *Matth. iii. 16, 17.* The holy Ghost descending upon him like a dove, as he came out of the water; and there was a voice from heaven, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. The same voice was heard by *Peter, James, and John*, at his transfiguration on the mount, as you may see, *Luke ix. 35.* And this *St. Peter* mentions, as a considerable argument of Christ's divine authority, *2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18.* For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Indeed he makes this testimony to be such an argument, as concurring with that which I mentioned before, is sufficient to persuade one that Christ was sent from God; but he does not make it to be equal to that, which he adds at the 19th ver. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, &c. Intimating the prophecies of the old testament

testament were greater confirmation, than this single testimony of a voice from heaven does amount to.

III. I proceed to the next evidence, which those who lived in our Saviour's time had of his divine authority, viz. the power of working miracles, which he was endowed withal; and this is the highest testimony that can be given to any person that he is sent from God. And in this respect chiefly is the gospel called *the light of the glorious gospel of Christ*, because of those glorious miracles whereby the gospel was confirmed. This is as it were the broad seal of heaven, which is sufficient to give confirmation to any doctrine which does not evidently contradict the perfections of the divine nature: and it is not credible, that the providence of God is so little tender of the concerns of mankind, as to communicate this power to any person that will abuse it to the confirmation of a lie. I deny not but the devil may do many strange things, and such as we cannot distinguish from some sort of miracles*; and where men by some great precedent provocation, have made it just for God to give them up to strong delusions to believe lies, because they would not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness; there God may permit the Devil to work strange wonders, as it is foretold, 2 *Thess.* ii. 9. That the coming of *Antichrist* shall be after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders, and all deceiveableness of unrighteousness. But in this case there will remain two ways, whereby impartial and considerate men, and such as are not blinded by prejudice or their lusts, may sufficiently discover, that this is not from God.

* Of this
see more,
Vol. II.
Serm. 175.
176, 177.

1. By the absurdity of the doctrine which those wonders are brought to confirm: and such were the lewd, and filthy, and senseless doctrines of the *Gnosticks*, to which *Simon Magus* pretended to give a confirmation by the wonders that he wrought, and this very probably may be that which the apostle refers to in this chapter. And such likewise are several of the doctrines of popery: such as the adoration of the virgin *Mary*, of saints and images, and the doctrine of transubstantiation; for the confirmation of which, they pretend a great many wonders have been wrought.

2. By the contrariety of the doctrine to that which hath had the confirmation of far greater miracles. Therefore if we should grant to the Papists, that several of those miracles which they brag of, were really wrought, (which considering the infinite cheats and impostures which have been practised by them in that kind, and have been discovered, we have no reason to grant;) yet because the doctrine, which they pretend to confirm, is absurd and unreasonable, and contrary to the doctrine which they themselves own to have had a far greater confirmation, by miracles far greater, and more unquestionable, more publicly done, and in such a manner, and with such circumstances, as do free them from all suspicion of imposture; I say, for this reason we cannot admit those doctrines to be of divine authority; because the confirmation which is given to them by those wonders, is overpowered by a greater and more divine testimony; as the magicians of *Pharoah*, though they did many odd feats, yet were plainly mastered and conquered by the greater miracles which *Moses* wrought.

The sum is this, That where-ever any person is endowed with an eminent power of working miracles, such as are of the first rank, great and unquestionable, and many and publicly wrought, this is one of the highest evidences we can have of the divine authority of any person of doctrine. Therefore *Nicodemus* does upon this ground very reasonably conclude, that our Saviour was sent from God, *John* iii. 2. *We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do those miracles which thou dost, except God be with him.* And our Saviour himself insists upon this frequently as the great proof of his divine authority, *Matth.* xi. 3, 4. When *John Baptist* sent two of his disciples to him, to be satisfied whether he was the *Messias*, he bids them report to *John* what the doctrine was which they heard him preach, and what miracles they saw him work for the confirmation of it; *Go and shew John those things which you do see and hear, The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear,*

*and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. John v. 33, 36. our Saviour there tells the Jews, that John bare witness of him; and that might satisfy them, because they looked upon John as a prophet: But, saith he, I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the father hath sent me. John xv. 24. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin. This was the great aggravation of their unbelief, that they resisted the evidence of so great miracles, such as no man in the world ever wrought. **

* See more
of this
Vol. II.
Sermon. 168.

I should now briefly run over the chief of those miracles of our Saviour, which we find recorded in the history of the gospel; and shew that they have all the advantages that miracles can have, to give satisfaction to men concerning their reality. But this I reserve for my next discourse.

S E R M O N CLXXXII.

The Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

2 C O R. iv. 3, 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The third
Sermon on
this text.

I N my last discourse, I was considering the *third* evidence which those who lived in our Saviour's time, had of his divine authority, *viz.* The power of working miracles, with which he was endowed. And in treating on this, I proposed briefly to run over the chief of those miracles of our Saviour, which we find recorded in the gospel, and to shew that they have all the advantages that miracles can have, to give satisfaction to men concerning their reality. And that I may proceed in some kind of order and method, I shall reduce the miracles that concern our Saviour to these *three* heads.

First, The miracles of his life.

Secondly, Those that were wrought at his death.

Thirdly, The great miracles of his resurrection from the dead, and those *two* that were consequent upon it, his ascension into heaven, and his sending the Holy Ghost upon the apostles and christians in miraculous gifts and powers.

I begin with the *First*, the miracles of his life. And in speaking of these I shall shew that they had all the advantageous circumstances to convince men of the reality of them, and to free them from all suspicion of imposture. They were many; they were great and unquestionable miracles; they were frequently wrought, and for a long time together; publickly, and in the presence of multitudes; and they were beneficial, and for the good of men.

1. They were many. There might be something of imposture suspected in a few instances, that might be chosen out for the purpose. But our Saviour gave instances of his divine power in several kinds, so that there is scarce any thing that is miraculous can be instanced in, wherein he did not shew his power. He healed
all

all manner of diseases, and that in multitudes of people, as they came accidentally without any discrimination, *Matth. iv. 23, 24.* And though most of his miracles were healing, yet he gave instances in other kinds; as in turning of water into wine; commanding down the storm; and walking upon the waters, &c. And though the history of the gospel mentions very many miracles that he wrought, yet St. *John* tells us, that those that are recorded, are but very few in comparison of what he did, *John xx. 30.* And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. And *Chap. xxi. 35.* And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. An hyperbolical expression, to signify the great number of his miracles and actions, besides what are recorded by the evangelists.

2. As they were many, so they were great and unquestionable, both as to the manner of doing them, and as to the things that he did.

(1.) Many things which were not miraculous in themselves, yet were so as to the manner of doing them, which was not by any magical words, and figures, and charms, and superstitious rites, according to the manner of those who pretended to work miracles among the heathens. 'Tis true, he healed many diseases which were curable by physick and art: yet then the manner was such as was above the ordinary course of nature; many he cured by a word only, or by a touch, and the cure was wrought immediately, and in the same instant when he spake the word, though they were at a great distance. Many were cured without his taking any notice of them, by touching the very hem of his garment; of all which I might give several instances, but that they are so well known to those who are acquainted with the history of the gospel. Sometimes indeed he performed the cure by degrees; as in the man that was restored to sight, and saw men at first confusedly, and without any distinction, as if they had been trees. *Mark viii. 24.* Sometimes he used some kind of means, but such as were very disproportionable in their nature to the effect that was produced; as in the case of the deaf man, which he cured by putting his finger into his ear, and by his spittle, *Mark vii. 33.* And the blind man whose eyes he anointed with clay mixed with spittle, and sent him to wash in the pool of *Siloam*, *John ix. 6, 7.* but most of his miracles he wrought in an instant, and merely by his word.

(2.) As to the things he did, many of them were miraculous in themselves. He cured many inveterate diseases, as *Matth. ix. 20.* a woman that had an issue of blood twelve years. He made the woman strait by touching her, that had been crooked, and bowed together eighteen years, *Luke xiii. 13.* and the man that had an infirmity thirty eight years, only by bidding him take up his bed and walk, *John v. 8.* He cured the man that was born blind, *John ix.* And which all men will grant to be miraculous, and to have exceeded all the power of nature that we know of, he raised several from the dead; and because it might be said that several of those were not really dead, but in a delirium or swoon, there is one instance beyond all exception, *John xi.* he raised up *Lazarus* to life, after he had been four days in the grave.

(3.) He wrought his miracles frequently upon all occasions that were offered, and for a long time together, during the whole time of his publick ministry, which is generally computed to have been three years and a half; a time sufficient to have detected any impostor in; especially one that shewed himself so openly, and conversed indifferently with all sorts of persons with so little guard and caution.

(4.) He did all his miracles publickly, not in corners and among some select company of people, but before multitudes, and in the greatest places of concourse; so that if there had been any thing of imposture in them, he gave the fairest opportunity that could be to his enemies to have detected him. *Mahomet's* miracles were wrought by himself alone, without witness, which was the best way in the world certainly for one that could work no miracles, but yet could persuade the people what he pleased: but our Saviour did nothing in pri-

vate. His transfiguration only was before three of his disciples; and therefore he made no use of that as an argument to the *Jews*, but charged his disciples to tell it to none, 'till after his resurrection, because that would give credit to it; after they were assured of that, they would easily believe his transfiguration; but all his other miracles were in the sight of the people. He healed publicly, and admitted all to see what he did. When he turned the water into wine, it was at a publick feast; when he multiplied the loaves and the fishes, it was in the sight of four or five thousand people; when he raised *Lazarus* from the dead, it was before a great multitude of the people. The works that he did durst abide the light, and the more they were manifested, the more miraculous they did appear.

(5.) His miracles were generally beneficial, and for the good of men; so that they had these two characters of divinity stamp'd upon them, that they were effects both of power and goodness. Most of his miracles were such as tended to the benefit of mankind; most of them were either healing, or feeding miracles; or refreshing, as turning the water into wine; or tending to the peace of human society, as the miracle that he wrought, rather than he would give offence by not paying tribute. 'Tis true indeed he might have shewn his power every way; he gave some instances of it in other kinds, which might seem more for his purpose, and for the manifestation of his power, as in his allaying the storm, and walking upon the water: but he wrought no miracles that were destructive, except only two, namely, his permitting the devil to enter into the swine, *Matth. viii. 28.* whereby the inhabitants of the place sustained a great loss. But our Saviour did this upon very good reason, as a reproof of that sordid temper which he saw to be in them; they were so immersed in the world, and wedded to their interests, that they would rather than lose any thing in that kind, forfeit all the blessings that the *Messias* brought with him; and this temper appeared afterwards in them; for though they were convinced that he had wrought a miracle, yet because they had sustained some prejudice, *they desired him to depart out of their coast.*

The other exception is his cursing the fig-tree, *Matth xxi. 19.* which had a moral signification to his disciples, and was a sharp warning to them, what they must look for, if they were unfruitful. Our Saviour rebukes our sloth and barrenness in the fig-tree.

Secondly, next to the miracles of our Saviour's life, I mentioned those that were wrought at his death, which though they were not wrought by him, yet they were wrought to give testimony to him, that he was some extraordinary person; for as much as when he died, the frame of nature was put into such a trembling and melancholy posture. So the history of the gospel tells us, *Matth. xxvii. 45.* That *from the sixth hour till the ninth, there was darkness over all the land*; which as learned men have calculated, could not be an eclipse, according to the natural course of things. And ver. 51, 52, &c. *The veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened.*

Thirdly, The great miracle which was wrought after his death, in raising him up from the dead, together with those two that were consequent upon it; his visible ascending into heaven, and his sending the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, and primitive christians, in such miraculous gifts and powers.

First, The great miracle of his resurrection, after he had lain three days in the grave. This was the miracle which was to be the chief attestation of his divine authority, and to give confirmation to the doctrine which he declared to the world. And accordingly we find that the chief office of the apostles was to be witnesses of his resurrection; and the great evidence they were to give to the world of his divine authority was, *that God raised him from the dead.* And we find the scripture every where laying the great stress of his divine authority upon this miracle, *Acts xvii. 31.* *By that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* Rom. i. 4. *Declared mightily to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead.*

dead. 1 Pet. i. 21. *Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory.*

Now that this miracle was really wrought, I shall endeavour to shew, by producing such evidence for it, as the nature of the thing to be proved (which is matter of fact) will bear. I shall therefore,

First, produce such testimony as we have for it.

Secondly, Add some considerations that may serve to give strength and advantage to the testimony.

First, For the testimony we have of this. In short we have it attested by an abundantly sufficient number of eye-witnesses; and greater evidence than this, matter of fact is not capable of. For the eye-witnesses and the number of them, you have them produced by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 5, 6, 7, 8. The sum of what he saith is this; that *Christ* after his resurrection, was seen once by *Peter* alone, once by *James* alone, and twice by all the apostles together, and by above five hundred brethren at once. So that the number of the eye-witnesses is abundantly sufficient. And that they did attest this, appears by the history of the gospel, which hath descended down to us by uncontroled tradition. And in this case we require no more credit to be given to the gospel, than to any other history, or narrative of matter of fact; which whosoever doth deny takes away the faith of history, and makes it impossible to prove the truth of any thing that is past *.

Secondly, I shall add some considerations that may serve to give strength and advantage to this testimony; partly relating to the persons that give this testimony, and partly to the matter or thing which they attest.

* Of this
see more
Vol. II.
Serm. 139.

1. In reference to the persons that gave this testimony, we may consider them with these three advantages.

(1.) That they are credible persons.

(2.) That they agree in their testimony.

(3.) That the greatest sufferings could not make them conceal it or deny it.

(1.) For the credibility of the persons. Two things render a witness suspected, want of knowledge, or of integrity; if either he do not sufficiently know the thing which he attests; or there be reason to suspect his fidelity in relating the thing. Now the witnesses in this case of the resurrection cannot be questioned for either of these; not for want of knowledge, because they were eye-witnesses, as I said before: nor for want of faithfulness. There are two things which ordinarily make us suspect the fidelity of a witness; if there be either an appearance of deceit in the manner of the relation, or of design in the end of it: but the witnesses of *Christ's* resurrection are free from both these grounds of jealousy.

1. There is no appearance of deceit in the manner of their relating it. We suspect a relation that is either too general, or too artificial; but the report of these witnesses cannot be charged with either of these. For,

(1.) They report the thing with all its circumstances of time and place; when he rose, what were the circumstances of it, where he was seen, and by whom, how often he appeared, what he did and said.

(2.) They use no art or insinuation in the manner of delivering, but report it with the greatest plainness, and nakedness, and simplicity that can be imagined; without any ambiguity, or obscurity, or flourish of language, as becomes an honest relator, who useth no arts, because he is not guilty to himself of any design to deceive.

(3.) Nor is there any appearance of design as to the end of their testimony. What design could they have, who did knowingly renounce all secular advantages of honour, and riches, and reputation, and forego all worldly contentment, and expose themselves to continual hazards and sufferings? They got nothing by bearing this testimony, but what every man that hath worldly designs doth most solicitously avoid.

(2dly.) They

(2dly.) They concur and agree in their testimony. They constantly delivered the same testimony, with all its circumstances, both in word and writing, several persons in several places, without varying or disagreeing in the least material circumstance.

(3dly.) The greatest sufferings could not make them either deny it, or conceal it; which is a great argument of their integrity. If the thing they attested had been false, it had been an unparallel'd madness for any one to persist in it to the loss of life; and incredible that so many should conspire in the same unreasonable and unaccountable folly; especially when the religion which they professed, did exclude all liars from all the happiness and rewards of the next life, which they pretended to be persuaded of; so that whatsoever those persons might be otherwise, and however they might falsify in other things, there is no reason to doubt of their truth and fidelity in this report, because they died for the testimony of it. Therefore the highest attestation of a thing is called *martyrdom*, and the most credible witnesses *martyrs*. And though bare martyrdom be not an argument of the infallible truth of a testimony, or of the infallibility of the person that gives it; yet it is one of the highest arguments that can be of his honesty and integrity in that thing, and that he believes himself; otherwise he would not die for it: and it is a good evidence of the general integrity of these persons, as to all other things, that they were so conscientious, as not for fear of death, to deny that which they believed to be a truth, nor to conceal that which they believed to be of importance.

2. As to the matter or thing which they attested, we may consider it with these advantages.

1. The resurrection of *Christ* was such a thing, as in its own nature they were capable of giving evidence to.

2. We will consider a little the circumstances of it, which add much to the credit of it.

3. We will consider the effects that this relation and report had in the world.

4. The circumstances of the persons who entertained the belief of it.

1. Let us consider that the resurrection of *Christ* is such a thing, as in the nature of it they were capable of giving testimony to. Indeed, if it were such a thing, as either in the nature of it were absolutely impossible, as if a man should say he had seen or handled a pure spirit; or else such, as these persons could not reasonably be presumed to be competent witnesses of it, as if a man that is altogether ignorant in geometry should say, that he had seen such a man demonstrate a proposition in *Euclid*; in these cases, though a man be ever so credible, yet he is not to be credited. But the resurrection of *Christ* is no such thing; no man that believes that God can make a living body out of nothing, can think it absolutely impossible to raise a dead body to life; nor was it a thing they could not be presumed competent witnesses of: for that which they attest concerning the resurrection of *Christ*, is that which every man may give evidence in, for it requires nothing but common sense and understanding; as to touch and handle a body, and know that it is a body; to see a man perform the operations of life, to see him walk, and eat, and hear him speak: and this they attest of *Christ*, after he was crucified, dead and buried; that they saw him several times, and conversed with him; and they could not be mistaken in the person, being so intimately and familiarly acquainted with him in his life-time.

2. We will consider a little the circumstances of his resurrection. He had foretold in his life-time, that he would rise again the third day. The chief priests and the pharisees remembered this saying, and therefore lest his disciples should come by night and steal him away, they make the sepulchre sure, seal the stone, and set a guard of soldiers. The disciples, whom they were afraid of, they were scattered with fear; and that it might appear that it was the work of God, there was a great earthquake, which made the guard to tremble; and in their sight an angel appearing in a most glorious manner, rolled away the stone; and when he was risen, and appeared to his disciples, they were terrified, and thought it had been a spirit, 'till our Saviour bids them *see him, and handle him, that he had flesh and bones, which a spirit could not have*. He conversed famili-

arly

liarly with them ; and for their greater satisfaction did eat with them ; and to satisfy the scrupulous unbelief of *Thomas*, he bid him put his hand into the hole of his side, and see in his hands the print of the nails, to shew that it was the same body that was crucified. Now the greater their jealousy and unbelief was, the greater is the evidence of the thing ; and it shews that it was upon great conviction, and when they could no longer resist the evidence of the thing, that they did believe it : and after all this, they saw him ascend up into heaven, and found the promise of the Spirit made good to them, to furnish them with power and gifts for carrying on the work of the gospel.

3. We will consider the strange and wonderful effects that this report and relation had in the world. The preaching of Christ crucified, and rising from the dead, had a strange operation upon the world. With such admirable success did this prevail, that in a few years the gospel was entertained in a great part of the world. The plain and naked relation of this, by men that were destitute of secular learning and arts, without the help of power, or policy, or any other worldly advantage, did prevail with men to entertain and embrace that profession, against the prejudice of education, the byas of corrupt nature, and the advantages of worldly interests : nor could all the opposition of the great and the wise, the princes and the philosophers of the world, give a check to the prevalency of it. Surely nothing but truth could have wrought those great wonders and effects, naked and unarmed. Those strange and miraculous effects which are matter of fact, and undeniable, one would think should render it very easy to any man to believe the miracle of Christ's resurrection.

4. We will consider the circumstances of the persons who entertained the belief of it. Many of them were very rational, and serious, and inquisitive persons, who had opportunity to satisfy themselves about the truth of it ; and if there had been any reason to disbelieve the testimony that was given, had such great and generous spirits, that if it had been for their advantage and interest to have believed it, yet out of the greatness of their minds they would not have entertained any ungrounded relation, much less a religion built upon it. Such were some eminent among the *Jews* and *Heathens* for their great learning, and knowledge of philosophy, and all excellent endowments, who were early converted to christianity. And as for the multitude who embraced the gospel, the doctrine of it was so contrary to their lusts, and the profession of it to their interests, that nothing can be imagined to have persuaded them to the belief of it, but a high satisfaction of the truth of it ; and particularly of this great miracle of Christ's resurrection, upon which principally the gospel doth rely. And thus I have endeavoured to give you the best evidence I could of the truth of this miracle.

I should now proceed to take notice of the objections that may be made against it : but this I shall reserve to the following discourse.

SERMON CXXXIII.

The Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

*The fourth
Sermon on
this Text.*

I HAVE been considering the evidence which those who lived in our Saviour's time had of his divine authority, from the power of working miracles, with which he was endowed.

The miracles which concern our Saviour, I reduced to *three* heads; those of his life; those wrought at his death; and the great miracle of his resurrection from the dead, together with those *two* that were consequent upon it; his visible ascension into heaven, and his sending the Holy Ghost.

As to the resurrection of our Saviour, I have produced the testimonies for it, and have added some considerations that may give strength and advantage to that testimony; and shall now proceed to take notice of the most considerable exceptions that may be made against it. And all the exceptions that can be brought against it, that are of any moment, and that I know of, are these *three*; that tradition of the *Jews*, that he was stolen out of the grave; or that he was not really dead; or that his appearance was an illusion from evil spirits. The first of these is ancient, and was the invention of the *Jews*, and denies the integrity of the witnesses of his resurrection, making them deceivers: the two last suppose the fidelity of the witnesses, but say, they were deceived, either as to his death, or as to his appearance afterward: and these have been since invented by atheistical spirits. I shall briefly answer them, and *first* in general, I say these *two* things.

1. That they who deny this, have this disadvantage, that they are to prove a negative, which is never capable of that evidence, which an affirmation is.

2. These exceptions look very like envy, for they do not concur to make up one strong objection against the testimony of Christ's resurrection; but each of them contradicts the other, and is inconsistent with them: for if the tradition of the *Jews* be true, that he was stolen out of his grave after he was dead and buried, and that the story of his appearing to them was a forgery, then the two latter exceptions are false, and so of the rest; so that these exceptions look very like the false witnesses that were suborned against Christ, that *they do not agree together*. But to the objections themselves I answer,

First, The tradition of the *Jews*; that his body was stolen out of the sepulchre, and all that which is related afterwards of his appearing to his disciples and conversing with them, and ascending into heaven, was a forgery and imposture.

Ans^r. We have early notice given of this in the history of the gospel, *Matth. xxviii. 11.* that when the chief priests heard that his body was gone out of the grave, they consulted together, and hired the soldiers to say that the disciples came by night, and whilst they were asleep, stole him away. Observe what it was that the soldiers were to testify, that whilst they were asleep, the disciples came and stole away his body. Very credible persons, that were to give testi-

testimony of what they saw done, whilst they were asleep ! A man had need be hired with a great sum to give such a testimony, so ridiculous ; and it seems the pharisees looked upon the governor as very simple, that would be so easily persuaded of so unlikely a thing.

2. It should seem it was not believed by themselves ; for *Josephus*, a knowing and learned man of that nation and religion, who lived immediately after that time, speaks positively in the 18th book of his antiquities, that *Christ was crucified, and appeared to his disciples the third day, rising from the dead* ; and he speaks not a word of the forgery, which had been much for the credit of his nation and religion.

3. If we compare the fidelity of the persons on both sides ; the witnesses of *Christ's* resurrection cannot be suspected of any worldly interest or design ; but the priests and pharisees were concerned, both in reputation and interest, to blast this miracle as much as they could ; because if it should be entertained, both their religion would be endangered, and they would be looked upon as murderers of him whose holiness and innocency was attested by such a miracle.

4. If this exception had been true, it had been easy to have discovered the imposture, and undeceived the people ; the gospel would have fallen and sunk in a short time. Nothing but truth could have born up and prevailed against so much opposition. If this had been the work of men, and an imposture, it *would have come to nought* ; but it was truth, and of God, and therefore it *could not be overthrown*.

Secondly, That he was not dead when he was put into the grave, that he was but in a swoon or deliquium, and so might rise again without a miracle.

Ans. 1. We may reasonably suppose, that the malice of the *Jews* took care to kill him. Besides, the circumstances of the story do sufficiently evidence it. Upon the piercing of his side, *water and blood came out* ; which was an evidence that his heart was pierced. And after his body was exhausted of its blood, there could be no return to life again. But it seems the soldiers were satisfied in the thing, who when they came to break his bones, spared him, *because they found he was already dead*.

2. If he was not dead yet, how could he rise again ? It was a pitiful securing of the grave, and a little great stone that was rolled upon it, if a weak and wounded, and spent man, after so much pain, and the expence of so much blood, could roll it away.

3. Suppose he did rise, what became of him afterwards ? How came we to have no particulars of what became of him ? If those which the story gives us be true, that after forty days he was taken up into heaven, we need not doubt of his resurrection, for this is as miraculous as that.

Thirdly, The *third* and *last* exception is as unreasonable as any, which grants that he did seem to appear to his disciples, but they were imposed upon by the illusion of evil spirits.

Ans. 1. That which may be an evasion in any case, is to be admitted in no case. This exception supposeth as much evidence for his resurrection, as this or any other thing is capable of ; and yet would make it an illusion ; but this denies all certainty ; for if we may be deceived when we have the greatest assurance of a thing that our senses can give us ; then we may not only question the resurrection of *Christ*, but every thing else.

2. If we believe the providence of God, we cannot think it to be so little vigilant, as that honest and well-meaning Persons should be continually exposed to the insolence and cheats of evil spirits, and in a matter of the greatest concernment should be ever liable to be deceived, and cannot help it.

Having thus considered our Saviour's resurrection, and answered the objections against it, I proceed to those *two* Miracles which followed his resurrection ; namely, his ascension into heaven ; and his sending the Holy Ghost upon the apostles and primitive christians in such miraculous powers and gifts.

First, His ascension into heaven. And of this the disciples of our Saviour were also eye-witnesses. So *St. Luke* tells us, *Acts* i. 4, 9. *And when they were assembled*

assembled together, and Christ among them after his resurrection, and when he had given them in charge what he would have them do, *as they looked on, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.* What more visible demonstration could there be, that this man was sent of God, than that after he had preached the doctrine which he came to deliver to the world, and confirmed it by so many miracles, and God had given so great an attestation to him, by raising him up from the dead; I say, what more visible demonstration that he came from God, than to see him taken up into heaven, after he had finished the work for which God sent him into the world?

Secondly, The sending of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles and primitive christians in such miraculous powers and gifts, whereby they were enabled to speak divers languages, in order to the more expedite publishing of the gospel to the world, to heal diseases, and to raise the dead, to foretell things to come, and (which was common with the apostles and all christians for some ages) they had a power of casting out Devils, by adjuring them in the name of Christ. Now what could be a clearer evidence that he came from God, and was returned to him, than the conferring of such miraculous powers and gifts upon men, after he was ascended into heaven, as a testimony that he was invested in his royalty, having a power conferred upon him to dispense those gifts to men?

*Vol. III. But of the ascension * of our Saviour, and the extraordinary gifts of the Holy
Serm. 142. Ghost, having upon other occasions discoursed at large, I shall need to add no
143, 144, more here; only before I conclude this head, I shall briefly mention the chief of
145, 175, those objections, which these miracles which were wrought by our Saviour, and on
176, 177, his behalf, are liable to, and endeavour to return a satisfactory answer to them.
And there are *two* objections against his miracles in general.

First, That he wrought them by the power of the Devil.

Secondly, The other objection is taken from that expression of the evangelist, *Matth. xiii. 58.* where it is said, that when Jesus was in his own country, *He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief;* which saying is perversely abused by some, as if it signified, that the credulity, and strong imagination of the people, was a great ingredient into his miracles.

First, That he wrought them by the power of the Devil. This was the objection which the Jews of old made against our Saviour. *Matth. xii. 24. That he cast out Devils by Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils,* who had power and authority over the rest, and consequently to cast out those that were subject to him; and the Jews at this day make the same objection against all his miracles. *Celsus* did the same.

To this I cannot render a better answer than our Saviour himself did, when this objection was first started, which was twofold.

1. That it was very unlikely that the Devil should contribute to the ruin and overthrow of his own kingdom. *Matth. xii. 25, 26. Every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation: and every city or house divided against itself, shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how then shall his kingdom stand.* The force of which argument is this, that it cannot be imagined, that he who preacheth a doctrine so contrary to the design which the Devil carried on in the world, and so destructive to his kingdom, as our Saviour did, should be assisted by him to confirm the doctrine by any miraculous effects; especially such as did so directly tend to the overthrow of his own kingdom, and to dispossess him of the advantage of tyrannizing over men, which he was so desirous to get and hold.

But, 2. He tells them, that by the same reason that they attributed those miracles of his to the Devil, all miracles that ever were wrought in the World, might be attributed to him. Did it appear by the tendency of his doctrine, or the course and design of his life and actions, or by any magical rites that he used, that he had any familiarity with the Devil; or carried on any design for him? What colour of reason then was there to ascribe the miracles that he wrought to the Devil, any more than the miracles that Moses had wrought; or any more than those dispossessions which were wrought by the children of their own nation, in the name of the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob? ver 27. *If I by Beelzebub*

but cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. Several among yourselves do, or at least pretend to cast out devils, by the power of God, and you believe they do so; why should you not think that I do it by the same power? what reason have you to suspect me of correspondence with the Devil more than them? No answer could have been more satisfactory in itself, and more opposite to those that made the objection.

The *second* objection is grounded upon a spiteful and malicious perverting of those words of the evangelist, *Matth. xiii. 58.* where it is said, that *Jesus* when he was in his own country *did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.* From whence some atheistical persons, as *Cæsar Vaninus*, and a wretched man of our own nation, who, I suppose, stole it out of him, have collected, that credulity and strong imagination in the people, were the principal ingredients in our Saviour's miracles; and where he did not meet with persons so disposed, he could do no great matter.

This objection deserves rather to be abhorred and detested as a groundless and malicious insinuation, than to be answered; but because it seems to have some colour as well as spite in it, I shall briefly return an answer to it, and that by giving a plain account of this passage in the evangelist; and that is this: our Saviour comes to *Nazareth*, the place where he had been born, and he began to instruct them in his doctrine, and as he used to do wherever came, he wrought some miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine; but they upon an unreasonable prejudice taken up against him, because they had known the meanness of his parents, and of his education, despised both his doctrine and his miracles. Our Saviour perceiving that upon this prejudice they rejected the evidence of his miracles, the highest attestation that God can give, saw that there was no good to be done upon them; and therefore leaving them to their own obstinacy and unreasonable unbelief, he forbore to do any more great works among them: for the text doth not say that he did *no* mighty works among them, because of their unbelief; but that he did *not many* mighty works among them; that is, finding them possessed with this unreasonable prejudice against him, he found they were not to be convinced by any miracle that he could work, and therefore though he had done *some mighty works* among them, yet he forbore to do *any more*, as a just judgment upon them for their obstinacy and unbelief. And that this is the plain meaning of it, there needs no more to convince any man, but to read over this passage of the evangelist, *Matth. xiii. 54, 55, 56, 57, 58.* *And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch, that they were astonished, and said, whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's Son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us. Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them; a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.* And now judge how little reason there is from these words, for any such foolish and malicious objection.

I might add farther, if it were necessary, that many of his miracles were such, as no credulity or strength of imagination could assist to the working of them; as I could make evident from very many instances, particularly that of raising *Lazarus*, after he had lain four days in the grave. But enough of this.

Now to reflect upon this evidence of Christ's divine authority from the miracles which he did, and which were wrought to give testimony to him. What greater satisfaction can any one be imagined to have concerning any person, that he is sent from God, than the apostles had, and the rest of those who conversed with our Saviour, and saw the miracles that were wrought by him, and on his behalf? Suppose we had lived in our Saviour's time, and had conversed with him, what greater evidence could we have desired of his divine authority, than to have seen with our eyes so many strange things done by him, exceeding any natural power that we know of, and things so beneficial to man-

kind; and all these wrought so frequently, and so openly? To have seen this person put to death, and at that instant the whole frame of nature disordered and put out of its course? To have seen this person, after he had lain three days in the grave, raised to life again; and to have the greatest assurance of this that our senses can give us of any thing; by frequent and familiar conversation; by discoursing with him; by eating and drinking with him; by touching and handling of his body; and afterwards to have seen this same person visibly taken up into heaven; and according as he had promised before he left the world, to have found ourselves afterwards endowed with a miraculous power of speaking all on the sudden all sorts of languages; of healing diseases; of foretelling things to come; of casting out Devils; of raising the dead; had we seen all this with our eyes, and experienced this strange power in ourselves; could there have remained any doubt in us, but that this person was sent from God, and specially commissioned from heaven, to declare the mind of God to the world?

If after all this, any man will say, that so many persons as were eye-witnesses of these things, might be deceived in a plain sensible matter; I would desire that man to prove to me that he is waking, or to evidence to me by better arguments, any thing else that he thinks himself most certain of.

IV. The *fourth* evidence which those who lived in our Saviour's time had of his divine authority, was the spirit of prophecy proved to be in him, and made good by the accomplishment of his own predictions. This also was a clear testimony that he was from God; for God challengeth this as peculiar to the Deity, to foretell future contingents. *Isa. xli. 23. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods.* The oracles of the heathen did give out some dark and doubtful conjectures about future things; but a clear and certain prediction of things was always looked upon as an argument, that the person that could do it was inspired from God; and therefore the spirit of prophecy which was in our Saviour, and by him conferred upon the apostles afterward, hath always been justly looked upon as a good testimony that he was from God. So the angel tells St. *John, Rev. xix. 10. That the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

Now the predictions of our Saviour were many; and those very plain, and punctual and particular; and such as all, or most of them, had their accomplishment in that age. That we may take a more distinct view of them, I shall reduce them to these *five* heads.

1. Those that foretold his death, and the circumstances of it.
2. His resurrection, and the particular circumstances of that.
3. The descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, with the circumstances belonging to that.
4. The destruction of *Hierusalem* before the end of that age, with the signs foregoing it, and the concomitant circumstances of that.
5. Those that foretold the fate of the gospel in the world, the opposition it should meet with, and yet the admirable success it should have, notwithstanding that opposition.

1. Those that foretell his death, and the circumstances of it. This he did very particularly, and at several times, *Matth. xvi. 21.* he told his disciples, *That he must go unto Hierusalem, and there suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be killed.* *Mark x. 33, 34.* And *Matth. xx. 18, 19.* He foretells more particularly the manner of their proceedings against him, that *the chief priests and scribes should condemn him to death; but that they should not put him to death, but deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and scourge, and crucify him,* which was afterwards done by *Pilate the Roman governor.* He foretold likewise the manner how this should be brought about, *Matth. xx. 18.* that he should be *betrayed into the hands of men.* And he did particularly point out before hand the man that was to betray him, *Matth. xxvi. 23. He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.* He foretold that his disciples should forsake him, *Matth. xxvi. 31. All of you shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.*

tered. And when *Peter* declared his confident resolution to stick to him, he foretold that he should deny him, with very particular circumstances of the time and manner of it. *Mark. xiv. 30. This night before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice:* which was all punctually accomplished.

2. He punctually foretold his resurrection with the circumstances of it, that *he should rise again the third day, Matth. xvi. 21.* and that *after he was risen, he would go before them into Galilee, Matth. xxvi. 32.* which was accomplished, *Matth. xxxviii. 16.*

3. He foretold likewise the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles in miraculous powers and gifts, *Luke xxiv. 49. Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Hierusalem, until ye be endowed with power from on high.* He specifies the place where the Holy Ghost should descend; and what the effects of this descent of the Holy Ghost upon them should be; he tells them particularly, *Mark xvi. 17, 18. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out Devils, and they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* All which was punctually fulfilled in the second of the *Acts*, and the following part of that history.

There are yet *two* other instances of our Saviour's prophetic Spirit, which I mentioned; but those I reserve to the next discourse.

S E R M O N CLXXXIV.

The Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

2 C O R. iv. 3, 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

I AM considering the *fourth* evidence which those who lived in our Saviour's time had of his divine authority, *viz. the spirit of prophecy* proved to be in him, and made good by the accomplishment of his predictions. I gave *five* instances of our Saviour's predictions. *The fifth Sermon on this Text.*

1. Those which foretold his death, and its circumstances.
2. Those which foretold his resurrection, and its circumstances.
3. Those which foretold the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, with the circumstances thereof.

These *three* I have considered, and now proceed to the *two* which remain,

4. The next instance therefore of our Saviour's prophetic Spirit, is his foretelling the destruction of *Hierusalem*, with the circumstances of it. Now because this is one of the greatest instances of our Saviour's prophetic Spirit, and so particular a prediction, so punctually answered by the event, therefore I shall insist the longer upon it: especially because I look upon it as one of the most convincing arguments that can be brought against the *Jews* for the truth of our religion.

And in order to our clearer proceeding in this matter that I am speaking to, I shall do these *three* things.

First,

First, Explain the series and order of this prediction of our Saviour's concerning the destruction of *Hierusalem*.

Secondly, Expound the particulars of it, as we find them in *Matth. xxiv.* compared with the other two evangelists that wrote of it, *St. Mark* and *St. Luke*.

Thirdly, Make some reflections upon this prediction, and the punctual accomplishment of it; from which it may appear of what force this argument is for the conviction of the *Jews* of the truth of our religion.

First, I shall explain the series and order of this prediction concerning the destruction of *Hierusalem*. And this is necessary, because it seems to most interpreters to be so intermingled with a prophecy of Christ's last coming at the end of the world, that it is no easy matter to separate those two prophecies of the destruction of *Hierusalem*, and the end of the world. Besides that it is incumbered with some other difficulties, arising from some particular expressions in this famous prediction of our Saviour's.

From the 34th verse of the 23d chapter of *St. Matthew*, to the 29th of the 24th chapter, there is a clear prediction of the destruction of *Hierusalem*, with the preceding signs, and concomitant and subsequent circumstances of it: but at the 29th verse, the prophecy of the end of the world seems to be designedly joined to it: for the evangelist says, *Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, &c.* Where he enumerates dismal signs, and forerunners of the dissolution of all things; but it is now 1600 years since the destruction of *Hierusalem*, and yet the world is not at an end. How is it then that the evangelist says, *Immediately after the tribulation of those days*? This is the first difficulty.

Secondly, After this prophecy of the end of the world, we find those words in all the three evangelists, *Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled.* As if not only the destruction of *Hierusalem*, but the end of the world were to happen in that age. This is the other difficulty.

But notwithstanding all this, I doubt not but by comparing the three evangelists together, to make the series and order of these prophecies very clear.

In order whereunto, we are to consider that our Saviour in this prophecy foretells three things very distinct in time.

1. The destruction of *Hierusalem*.

2. The fate and condemnation of the *Jewish* nation after this desolation, and during their captivity among the *Gentiles*, among whom they were to be scattered. And this we have clearly and fully expressed by *St. Luke*, xxi. 23, 24. *There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Hierusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* So that this prediction comprehends from the destruction of *Hierusalem* all the time of the captivity of the *Jews* among the *Gentiles*, which we see is not yet expired, and God alone knows how long it shall last. And then,

3. Forerunning signs of the end of the world, which the evangelists say shall happen *after the tribulation of those days*; that is, when God hath made an end of punishing the nation of the *Jews*. And this seems to me wholly to clear and take off the first difficulty.

As to the second, namely, that after the prophecy of the end of the world, we find these words added by our Saviour, *Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all these things shall be fulfilled*, which seems to intimate that the end of the world should happen in that age. For the answering of this, I shall not betake myself to that refuge which some have done, by explaining these words thus, *this generation*, that is, *this nation shall not pass away*, shall not be utterly destroyed, but shall remain scattered up and down the world, as a monument of God's displeasure against them, 'till the end of all things. For though the expression *γενεὰ αὐτῶν*, *this generation*, may well enough be translated *this nation, this race of people*; yet the precedent words will not admit this interpretation; for it is said in the verse immediately before, *so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.* So that our Saviour speaks of something very near at hand, which necessarily confines it to that generation.

Therefore the plain solution of this difficulty is this, that our Saviour ends his prediction of the destruction of *Hierusalem*, and the end of the world, at the 31st verse, where he says, that *the Son of man shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* And then he makes some reflections upon what he had foretold concerning the destruction of *Hierusalem*, and the end of the world.

(1.) As to the destruction of *Hierusalem*, he tells them a parable of the fig-tree, that by the putting forth of its leaves, we know that the summer is nigh; so likewise when ye shall see all these things, namely, all those signs which I have given you of the destruction of *Hierusalem*, know that it is near, even at the doors; and then he adds, *Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled*; that is, many of those who are now alive, shall live to see all those signs which I have mentioned. And then,

(2.) He reflects upon his prediction of the end of the world, ver. 36. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, &c.* that is, not of that other day, of which I have been speaking, namely, of the end of the world, no man knows; as if he had said, the signs which I have given of the destruction of *Hierusalem* are as plain, as the budding of the fig-tree is a sign of summer: but I have not given such plain signs of the end of the world, and the day of judgment. That I have declared to you in dark allegories of the sun's being darkened, and the moon's not giving her light, and the stars falling from heaven, which cannot be understood literally, and the mystical meaning of them is very hidden.

And thus I hope I have removed those difficulties, and made the order and series of this prophecy very clear.

Secondly, I come in the next place to expound the particulars of this prophecy, so far as it concerns the destruction of *Hierusalem*, as we find them in the 24th of St. Matthew, compared with the other two evangelists that wrote of it, St. Mark and St. Luke; and to shew the exact accomplishment of each of these particulars, not only from the tradition of christians, but from the writings of the Jews and heathens, which are so much the stronger on our side, because they are the testimonies of enemies. And in the expounding of this prophecy, I shall distinctly consider these three things.

1. Our Saviour's general prediction of the siege and total destruction of the city of *Hierusalem*, and of the temple, which you have from the 34th verse of the 23^d Chapter, to the 3^d verse of the 24th.

2. His prediction of the signs that should forerun the destruction of *Hierusalem*, from verse the 3^d, to verse the 21st.

3. The concomitant and sublequent circumstances of it, from verse 21. to verse 29.

1. Our Saviour's general prediction of the siege of *Hierusalem*, and of the total destruction of the city. This our Saviour foretells, Luke xix. 41, 42, 43, 44. *And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace: but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.* So Josephus tells, Lib. vi. that Titus raised a wall round about *Hierusalem*, and kept them in on every side; so that none could come out, though many thousands were famished with hunger; which was so sad and dismal a calamity, that our Saviour, though he knew how just a cause there was for it, yet out of very humanity and tenderness of nature, he could not but upon the foresight of so sad a destruction, weep over it. He indeed expresseth his vehement desire that this might have been prevented, chap. xxiii. 37. *O Hierusalem, Hierusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* Therefore having brought this ruin

ruin wilfully upon themselves, he pronounceth the sentence of their desolation, *verse 38. Behold your house is left unto you desolate!* And at the beginning of the next chapter, when the disciples were shewing him the beautiful structure of the temple, he foretels, that *there should not one stone be left upon another, which should not be thrown down.*

Now that all this was punctually accomplished, *Josephus* tells us, *Lib. vii. Bell. Jud.* that when the Romans had taken the city, *Cæsar* gave order to lay it waste to the ground, excepting some part of the wall which was left for the guards of soldiers, and three of the strongest towers, which he ordered to be left for a standing monument of the Roman courage; but all the rest of the city was so levelled, that no man that should come to see it, could believe that it was ever inhabited.

And our Saviour's prediction of the utter ruin of the temple, was most remarkably fulfilled. For the Roman history tells us, that *Turnus Rufus* with a plough-share did tear up the foundation of the temple, and left no part of it, not so much as under ground, undissolved. So that our Saviour's prophecy was literally fulfilled, *there was not left one stone upon another, that was not thrown down.*

2. I shall next consider our Saviour's prediction of the signs which should fore-run the destruction of *Hierusalem*, namely, these eight.

First, That there should rise up false and counterfeit Christs or Messias's.

Secondly, Great judgments should befall the world, and particularly that nation, not long before that time; there should be wars, and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes in divers places.

Thirdly, Fearful fights and signs from heaven.

Fourthly, Persecution of the christians.

Fifthly, That upon this occasion there should be a great apostasy of christians.

Sixthly, That upon this persecution many false prophets or teachers should arise.

Seventhly, That there should be an universal publication of the gospel before this great desolation should happen.

Eighthly and *lastly*, which was to be the most immediate sign and forerunner of their ruin, *The abomination of desolation*, should be seen standing in the holy place. And these you have set down from the 3d verse of this 24th chapter, to the 21st, which I shall briefly expound, and shew how the event did correspond to the prediction.

Our Saviour having before foretold the destruction of *Hierusalem* and the temple in general, the disciples come to him, and ask him two questions, *When these things should be? And what should be the sign of his coming?* that is, in judgment to destroy *Hierusalem*, and what should be the signs of the end of the world? I shall only consider the *first*, the signs that should forerun the destruction of *Hierusalem*, as being only pertinent to my present purpose.

First, He foretels there should be false and counterfeit Christs, or Messias's, *ver. 3, 4. Take heed that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.* This our Saviour gives as one of the first signs, and therefore *St. Luke* adds, *chap. xxi. 8. The time draweth near*, that is, it should not be long before this sign should appear; and it accordingly happened. *Josephus* mentions several of these; of whom, though *Josephus* do not expressly say that they called themselves the Messias, yet he says that which is equivalent, that they undertook to rescue the people from the Roman yoke, which was the thing which the Jews expected the Messias should do for them: And therefore we find *Luke xxiv. 21.* that the disciples that were going up to *Emmaus*, and knew not that Christ was risen, and were doubtful what to think of him, because it was the third day, they say, *We hoped this had been he that should have redeemed Israel;* that is, they hoped this had been the Messias, that being it seems a common periphrasis of the Messias, that he was *he that was*

was to deliver Israel. Such as one *Theudas* pretended himself to be; not that *Theudas* of whom *Gamaliel* speaks, *Acts* v. 36. but another of the same name, who about twelve years after our Saviour's death, when one *Cuspius Fadus* was procurator of *Judea*, rose and seduced the people; of whom *Josephus*, *Lib.* xviii. gives this account, that being a *forcerer*, he rose up, and deceived many; which is the very expression our Saviour useth, *They shall deceive many*. This man persuaded a great multitude to bring their goods and follow him down the river *Jordan*, which he promised by his command to divide, and to give them a safe passage over it. But while he was thus playing the fool among the people, *Fadus* sent some forces, and surprized him and his company, killing many of them, and cutting off his head; and so there was an end of him.

Such likewise were those impostors, which about two and twenty years after our Saviour's death were so rife among them, when *Felix* was governor of *Judea*; of whom *Josephus* tells us, that they drew multitudes after them into the wilderness, promising to work great signs and wonders before them; which agrees exactly with the description which our Saviour gives of the false Christs and false prophets, *verse* 24. where he says, that they should shew great signs and wonders, σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα, the very words which *Josephus* useth. And *verse* 26. If they shall say to you, he is in the desert, go not forth; answerable to what *Josephus* says, that they drew many after them into the wilderness.

Such an one likewise was the *Egyptian* prophet, who, as *Josephus* tells, came to *Hierusalem* much about the same time, and persuaded the people to follow him to mount *Olivet*, persuading them, that from thence they should see the walls of *Hierusalem* fall, and so might enter the city. Which *Felix* understanding, sent soldiers, and slew and took several of them, but the *Egyptian* impostor himself made an escape; which is the reason of that saying of the chief captain to *Paul*, *Acts* xxi 38. Art not thou the *Egyptian*, which before these days madest an uproar? &c.

Such another was that impostor (if he be distinct from the former) who, as *Josephus* tells us, about three years after, under *Festus Portius* the procurator, deceived the people with vain promises of deliverance, and ease from their oppressions, if they would follow him into the wilderness; but *Festus* sent soldiers, and destroyed him and his company.

And shall deceive many, that is, by raising false expectations in the people, shall draw them into ruin, as *Josephus* tells us they did many of the Jews. And this our Saviour elsewhere foretold as a just judgment of God upon them for rejecting of him who was the true *Messias*. *John* v. 43. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not, if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

Secondly, the next sign our Saviour gives, is wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, &c. *ver.* 6, 7. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. About this time the Jews began to be set upon in several places, by the command of the emperor, and many thousands of them were slain at *Alexandria* and *Babylon*, as *Josephus* tells us. And there was a fear and rumour of a general war denounced against them by *Caius Caligula*, the emperor, unless they would receive his statue into the temple. Upon this rumour the whole nation was in great astonishment, insomuch that the Jews left their business, and neglected to till their grounds, expecting the Romans would have fallen upon them; of which consternation, both *Josephus* and *Philo* give us a particular account.

Our Saviour adds, See that ye be not troubled; for these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet; that is, when you see the nation in this danger from the Romans, be not ye troubled, as the Jews will be, thinking now will be the ruin of the nation. This and many other things will happen, before the final end come. And accordingly it fell out. For so *Josephus* and *Tacitus* tell us, that this storm was blown over by the sudden death of the emperor.

Verse 7. Nation shall rise up against nation. Which happened under *Claudius* and *Nero*, the two next Roman emperors, when in several cities, as *Cesarea*,

Ptolemais, and many others, the *Jews* and those of other nations that inhabited those cities, fell upon and destroyed one another, as may be read at large in *Josephus*.

And *kingdom against kingdom*. This seems to refer to the several *provinces* or *tetrarchies* in *Palestine*, which were also called *kingdoms*, which at this time had cruel wars against one another; as the *Jews* and the *Galileans* against the *Samaritans*, and several others that *Josephus* speaks of.

And *there shall be famines and pestilences*. Accordingly *Josephus* tells us, that under *Claudius Cæsar* there was a great famine in *Judæa*, namely, that which was prophesied of by *Agabus*, *Acts* xi. 28. And this *Grotius* very probably supposeth to be the reason why *St. Paul*, in his epistles written about that time, is so earnest with the christians to send relief to the saints at *Hierusalem*. *Pestilences*, they usually follow famine; and *earthquakes* in divers places; which happened in the times of *Claudius* and *Nero*. *Philostratus* speaks of a great earthquake that happened in *Crete* in the time of *Claudius*, and in several other places, as *Smyrna*, *Chios*, *Samos*, &c. not long before the destruction of *Hierusalem*; *Tacitus* speaks of one in *Asia* about the same time. And though these were at a greater distance, than the other signs which our Saviour mentions; yet the *Jews* could not but hear of them, because several of the nation were dispersed into some of those places.

Thirdly, *Fearful sights and signs from heaven*. So *St. Luke*, chap. xxi. ver. 11. *There shall be fearful sights, and great signs from heaven*. *Josephus* gives us a clear comment upon this, *Bell. Jud. Lib. vii.* says he, "This wretched people believed impostors and counterfeits, but those great signs and prodigies which did forerun their desolation, they neither minded, nor believed." A little before their destruction (he tells us) there hung over their city a fiery sword, which continued for a year together. A little before their rebellion against the *Romans*, there appeared a comet, which shined so clear in the temple, and about the altar, as if it had been day. And the same day an heifer, that was led to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the middle of the temple. The eastern gate of the temple, which was of massy brass, and very heavy, and could scarce be shut by the strength of twenty men, and was constantly made fast with strong locks and bars, flew open at midnight, which when it was told to the magistrate, and he came to see it, they could scarce get strength enough to shut it. One evening not long before their desolation, there were seen in the air chariots and armies hovering over the city. At the feast of *Pentecost*, the priests going one night into the temple, according to their custom, first heard a noise, and afterwards a sudden voice, saying, *Let us go hence*. And which is very terrible, one *Jesús*, a plain countryman, four years before any troubles began, when the city was in a deep peace, came up to *Hierusalem*, and upon one of their festivals, began to cry out with a loud voice, *A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Hierusalem and the temple, a voice against bridegrooms and brides, a voice against the people*. And thus he went about crying day and night; and being seized on by the magistrate, and punished and tortured, he would not give over, but still went crying about, *wo, wo to Hierusalem*; and thus he continued for seven years and five months together, and was neither weary nor hoarse until the city was besieged, and then he was quiet; but one time went up upon the walls, and cried with a loud voice, *Wo, wo to the city, and the temple, and the people*, and added, *Wo also to myself*; and immediately was struck dead by a stone out of a cross-bow.

Were not these *fearful sights, and great signs from heaven*? And these we have all related by one of the most prudent historians, who lived at that very time, and that very place; and he says, that many were alive when he wrote, and could attest all this.

Verse 8. *All these are the beginnings of sorrows*. The scripture usually compares the greatest sufferings and afflictions to the pains of a woman in travail, to which our Saviour here alludes, and says, *These were but the first pangs, nothing to those throws which should come at last*.

These

These are *three* of the signs fore-running the destruction of *Hierusalem*, which were predicted by our Saviour. There are yet *five* more, which I reserve for my next discourse on this subject.

SERMON CLXXXV.

The Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

THE *fourth* evidence, which those who lived in our Saviour's time had of his divine authority, was, the spirit of prophecy proved to be in him, and made good by the accomplishment of his predictions. *The sixth Sermon on this Text.*

I have given *five* instances of our Saviour's predictions, and am now treating on the *fourth* of them, viz. his foretelling the destruction of *Hierusalem*, with the circumstances of it.

In explaining the particulars of this prophecy, I proposed *three* things to be considered:

1. Our Saviour's general prediction of the siege, and total destruction of *Hierusalem* and the temple.
2. His predictions of the signs that should forerun it.
3. His predictions of the concomitant and subsequent circumstances of it.

I am upon the *second* of these, viz. our Saviour's prediction of the signs that should forerun the destruction of *Hierusalem*; *three* of which I have dispatched, and now proceed to those which remain.

Fourthly, Another sign which our Saviour foretold, as a forerunner of the destruction of *Hierusalem*, was persecution of the christians. *They shall deliver you to be afflicted, and shall kill you.* St. Mark expresseth it more particularly, Mark xiii. 9. *But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten, and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.* And these did partly happen before the fore-mentioned calamities, and partly upon them: but our Saviour first reckons by themselves the common calamities of the nation; and then he comes to those which did concern his disciples and followers; and this follows very fitly upon the former more general calamities. For we find the fathers in their apologies every where complaining, that the *Jews* and Heathens laid the blame of all the judgments and calamities which befell them, as famine, pestilence, and earthquakes, upon the christians, as the causes of them; and from this pretence they many times took occasion to persecute them.

They shall deliver you to be afflicted. This was fulfilled in delivering some of the apostles to be whipped and imprisoned by the chief priests and rulers, as *Peter* and

John; or giving them up to the Roman power, as they did *James* and *Peter* to *Herod*; *Paul* to *Gallio*, *Felix* and *Festus*, and last of all to *Nero*.

And shall kill you. *St. Luke* saith some of you; for of others he saith, that not a hair of their head should fall to the ground. Thus *Stephen* was killed by a popular tumult; and the two *James*'s were put to death under colour of a judicial process; the one stoned by the council of the *Jews*, and the other put to death by *Herod*.

And ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. Which began under *Nero*, who charging the christians with the burning of the city, as *Tacitus* tells us, when himself had set it on fire, tortured many of them as guilty of the fact. For my name's sake. This was exactly fulfilled, in that the christians were so miserably persecuted for no other cause, but for being called christians. They did not punish them for opposing their idolatry, for that the *Jews* did as well as the christians, who yet escaped their malice; nor could they lay any other crime to their charge. Hence was that common saying among the heathens. *Vir bonus Caius Sejus; tantummodo quod Christianus.*

Fifthly, And upon this persecution, the apostasy of many from christianity, *Verse 10.* Then shall many be offended; that is, fall off from christianity because of these persecutions; as we read several did, *Demas*, *Hermogenes*, *Phygellus*, and probably several others.

And they shall betray one another, and hate one another. Which was remarkably fulfilled in the sect of the *Gnosticks*, who did not only decline persecution themselves, but joined with those that persecuted the christians, as ecclesiastical history tells us.

Sixthly, that likewise upon this occasion of persecution many false prophets should arise and deceive many, *verse 11.* which seems to refer to *Simon Magus*, who gave himself out to be the power of God, and to the other heads of the *Gnostick* sect. *Verse 12.* And the love of many shall grow cold, because iniquity shall abound. Which seems to refer likewise to the *Gnosticks*, of whom *St. John* in his first epistle doth so frequently make mention of their name; as he that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, &c. of whom he doth so much complain for want of love to their brethren.

Verse 13. But he that shall endure to the end, shall be saved; that is, he that shall continue constant in the profession of the faith, notwithstanding these persecutions and apostasies, and false teachers that shall arise, shall be saved.

Seventhly, That there should be an universal publication of the gospel, before this great desolation should happen, *verse 14.* And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations. And this was accomplished before the destruction of *Hierusalem*: for the gospel was published all over the Roman empire, before that time: and that is, it, which is here meant by the world, in the same sense that *Augustus* is said by *St. Luke*, to have taxed all the world. And this is the very phrase which the Romans constantly used, calling the Roman empire, *imperium orbis terrarum*. And that the gospel was thus published, we may easily believe, if we consider how many were sent forth for this purpose. and what indefatigable pains they took in this work, especially *St. Paul*, who preached from *Hierusalem* to *Illyricum*, which according to the account which he gives of the journey, is computed to be no less than 2000 miles, and yet he made considerable stays in many places.

For a witness unto all nations; that is, that all nations might be convinced of the unreasonable obstinacy of the *Jews*, before God brought those dreadful calamities upon that nation.

And then shall the end come; that is, the final destruction of the *Jews*, the total desolation of the Jewish church and commonwealth, according to the prophecy of *Jacob*, *Gen. xlix. 10.* which put these two signs together, that the scepter shall not depart from *Judah*, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until *Shiloh* come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Eighthly, The last and most immediate sign and forerunner which he gave of their destruction, is the standing of the abomination of desolation in the holy place

place. Verse. 15. *When ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place; then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains.* There is a great difference among expositors, what is here meant by the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. Some refer it to the statue of *Adrian* the emperor, placed where the temple was at *Hierusalem*. But that cannot be, because that was a long time after the destruction of *Hierusalem*, and therefore could not be given by our Saviour for a sign and forerunner of it. Others (as *Capellus*) refer it to the faction of the zealots, which before *Titus* came to besiege *Hierusalem*, seized upon the temple, and prophaned it by bloodshed and slaughter, and made so horrible a devastation in the city. And this would not be improbable, if *St. Luke* had not given us so clear an interpretation of it, *Luke xxi. 20, 21.* who instead of the abomination of desolation, mentioned by *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark*, puts the Roman armies. And when ye shall see *Hierusalem* compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them that are in *Judæa* flee to the mountains. So that according to *St. Luke*, the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, is the Roman armies compassing *Hierusalem*; which therefore is called the abomination of desolation, because it would cause so great a desolation among them. When ye see *Hierusalem* compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh: and it is said to stand in the holy place, because *Hierusalem* was the holy city, and so many furlongs about it were accounted holy. Now when the Roman army should approach within the limits of the holy ground, then the abomination of desolation might be said to stand in the holy place: but the word abomination seems particularly to refer to the Roman ensigns, upon which were the images of their emperors, which the Romans worshipped as *Suetonius* expressly tells us; and *Tacitus* calls them, their *bellorum Dii*, their Gods of war. Now it was an abomination to the Jews to see these idols set up within the limits of the holy city. To which I may add what *Josephus* tells us afterward, that the Romans after they had conquered the city, set up those ensigns in the ruins of the temple, and sacrificed to them.

Verse 15. *Then let them that be in Judæa, flee to the mountains; and let him which is on the house top, not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field, return back to take his cloaths;* which are several expressions to signify what haste the christians would make, when they saw the Romans making so near approaches to *Hierusalem*.

Let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains. Some refer this to the last siege by *Titus*; but I see no probability for that; for the Jews did not permit any to go out of the city. Others refer it to *Vespasian's* drawing his forces toward *Hierusalem* sometime before the siege, but hearing of the death of *Nero* the emperor, he forbore to besiege it, till he had received orders from the new emperor; and that this was a warning to the christians, and they took their opportunity then to flee into the mountains. But this could not be neither, because for a good while before, the faction of the zealots under *John* and *Simon's* faction, who lay without the city, did slay all who endeavoured to escape out of the city. If we limit these words to *Hierusalem* (which the text does not) the most probable time was when *Hierusalem* was first compassed by the Roman army under *Cestius Gallus*, who afterward withdrew his siege; and then indeed those that would, had liberty to flee away. And at this time *Josephus* doth say, that many did flee, foreseeing the approaching danger. But there is no reason to confine it to *Hierusalem*; for our Saviour's words are more large, *Then let them that are in Judæa flee to the mountains.* And if so, there is an express passage in *Josephus* to this purpose, that when *Titus* was drawing up his forces towards *Hierusalem*, a great number of those who were at *Fericho* went from thence, *εἰς τὰ ὄρη*, into the mountainous places, and thereby consulted their own safety.

Verse 15. *Let him that is on the house-top not come down to take any thing from thence.* Our Saviour alludes to the fashion of the Jewish houses, which had plain roofs,

roofs, upon which they used to walk ; and he bids them make such haste, that when they saw this sign, they should not think of saving any thing in their houses, but betake themselves presently to the mountains for safety.

Verse 16. *Neither let him that is in the field return back to take his cloaths.* Another expression to signify what haste they should make from the approaching danger.

Verse 17. *But woe unto them that are with child, and to those that give suck in those days,* because of the impediment that this would be to their flight. Or possibly it may refer to the dreadful story, not paralleled in any place or age, which *Josephus* tells of one *Mary*, who in the time of the siege, out of very famine, boiled her sucking child and eat it. And therefore *St. Luke* xxi. 23. does mention this of *the womens being with child*, not as an impediment to flight, but as an instance of the great calamity that should befall them. *Luke* xxi. 23. *But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days: for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.*

Verse 18. *But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the sabbath-day.* Not in winter, because of the hardness of the season, and the difficulty of travelling and living upon the mountains : *nor on the sabbath-day.* This concerned the christian *Jews* as well as others, most of which observed the *Jewish* law and rites after our Saviour's death, till the desolation of the *Jewish* state and temple, as appears out of the history of the *Acts*. For though *St. Paul* stood for the liberty of the *Gentiles* ; yet it appears from *Acts* xxi. 21. that he vindicated himself from the calumny or aspersion which was cast upon him, as if he taught the *Jews* which were among the *Gentiles*, to forsake *Moses*, and that they ought to circumcise their children, nor to walk after their customs. So that the christian *Jews* retaining the observance of the *Jewish* sabbath, upon which it was not lawful to go any farther than a sabbath-days journey, which was scarce two miles ; if the danger should happen at that time (as the *Romans* usually took advantages to make all their onsets on that day, knowing the superstition of the *Jews* in that point) they must needs have been in great perplexity.

Having thus particularly treated of the signs which our Saviour foretold, as the fore-runners of the destruction of *Hierusalem* ; I proceed,

3. To consider the concomitant and subsequent circumstances of it. As,
 1. The unparallel'd greatness of their calamity.
 2. The arising of false Christs.
 3. Their being led into captivity, and dispersed up and down in the world.
 4. Their continuance in this captivity and dispersed state out of their country, 'till the gospel had had its course among the *Gentiles*.

1. The unparalleled greatness of their calamity and destruction, *Verse* 19. *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, neither ever shall be.* This is a very material circumstance in this prophecy, that the calamity of the *Jews* should be so strange and unparalleled as never was in the world before : for though it might easily have been foretold from the temper of the people, which was prone to sedition, that they were very like to provoke the *Romans* against them ; yet there was no probability that all things should have come to that extremity ; for it was not the design of the *Roman* government to destroy any of those provinces which were under them, but only to keep them in subjection and reduce them by reasonable severity in case of revolt. But that such a calamity should have happened to them under *Titus*, who was the mildest and farthest from severity of all mankind, nothing was more unlikely ; and that any people should conspire together to their own ruin, and so blindly and obstinately run themselves into such calamities, as made them the pity of their enemies, was the most incredible thing ; so that nothing less than a prophetic spirit could have foretold so contingent and improbable a thing as this was.

St. Luke expreſſeth the diſmal calamity that ſhould happen to them in other words, but much to the ſame ſenſe, *Luke xxi. 22, 23.* For theſe be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But wo unto them that are with child, and to them that give ſuck, in thoſe days: for there ſhall be great diſtreſs in the land, and wrath upon this people. And to this *Joſephus* fully gives teſtimony, as will appear, both by what he ſays in general concerning their calamity, and by the particular account of their miſeries and ſufferings.

(1.) In general, he tells us, that never was any age ſo fruitful of miſery as this was; and almoſt in our Saviour's words, in his preface to his books of the ſiege of *Jeruſalem*, he ſays, that all the calamities that had fallen upon any nation from the beginning of the world, were but ſmall in compariſon of what happened to the nation of the Jews in that age. And in his ſixth book he ſays, that as there was never any nation ſo wicked, ſo never any nation ſuffered ſuch calamitous accidents. But this will beſt appear,

(2.) By a brief and particular enumeration of their calamities. Not to mention the burning and deſtroying of ſeveral of their chief cities, as *Zabulon*, *Gadara*, *Japha*; *Jotapatah*, *Joppa*, and ſeveral others; I ſhall inſiſt chiefly upon the ſufferings of the people themſelves, by their tumults and ſeditious againſt the Romans. Before the coming of *Veſpaſian*, there were ſlain at *Hieruſalem* and in *Syria* 2000, at *Askalon* 2500, at *Ptolemais* 2000, at *Alexandria* 50000, at *Joppa* 8400, at mount *Aſamon* 2000, at *Damaſcus* 10000, and afterward at *Askalon* by *Antonius* a Roman commander 18000; in all, almoſt one hundred thouſand.

By *Veſpaſian* in *Galilee* and other parts, very great numbers; at *Japha* 15000, at mount *Gerizim* 11600, at *Jotapatah* (the city of which *Joſephus* our hiſtorian was governor) 40000, at *Joppa* 4000, at *Tarichæa* near upon 8000, at *Gamala* 9000, at *Giſcala* 2000; in all fourſcore and ten thouſand.

Afterward by their own ſeditious at *Hieruſalem* 8500 at ſeveral times; and afterward by the faction of the zealots 12000 of the chiefſt and nobleſt of the citizens were ſlain at one time; at the river *Jordan* by *Placidus* 13000, beſides many thouſands drowned, ſo that the river was filled up almoſt with dead carcaſſes. At two towns in *Idumæa* by *Veſpaſian* 10000, at *Geraſa* 1000; in all forty-five thouſand.

Whiſt *Veſpaſian* was thus waſting the cities of *Judæa*, the faction of the zealots filled all places at *Hieruſalem*, even the temple itſelf, with continual ſlaughters; and after they had conquered *Ananus*, who ſtood for the people againſt the zealots, and got all into their own hands, they were divided into parties, and made ſlaughter of one another; and one party let in *Simon*, who headed a ſeditious multitude, which he brought out of the country; and after that they were ſubdivided into three parties, *John's*, and *Eleazer's*, and *Simon's*, which held ſeveral parts of the city, and day and night continued to deſtroy one another; in which ſeditious all their granaries of corn, and magazines of arms were burnt; ſo that though proviſion had been laid in the city, that would have ſufficed for ſeveral years, yet before they came to be beſieged by *Titus*, they were almoſt reduced to famine.

And after they were beſieged, at the firſt they united a little againſt the Romans; yet after a few days, they divided again into factions, and more of them were ſlain by one another's hand, and with more cruelty than by the Romans; inſomuch that *Titus* the general of the Romans wept ſeveral times, to conſider the miſery they brought upon themſelves; and their very enemies were more pitiful towards them, than they to one another.

After two months ſiege, the famine began to rage within, and then all manner of cruelties were exerciſed by the ſoldiers upon that miſerable people; and at laſt they were brought to ſuch neceſſity, that many endeavoured to flee out to the enemy, and yet were not permitted; but as many as were ſuſpected of any endeavour to eſcape, were cruelly killed. It is not to be imagined what barbarous inhumanities, in thoſe ſtraights, all exerciſed one toward another; ſnatching

snatching the meat out of one another's mouths, and from their dearest friends, and their very children.

And so obstinate were they, that neither those calamities which they suffered, nor the severity of the *Romans* in crucifying many thousands of them before the walls, and threatening them all with the same death, in case they would not yield, in ripping open the bowels of two thousand of them in a night, who fled out of *Hierusalem*, upon a report that they had swallowed gold (as many of them had) *Josephus Lib. vi. cap. 15.* nor all the kind messages of *Titus*, offering peace to them, and using all manner of intreaties and persuasions not to run upon their own ruin, could prevail with them to accept of a peace. And thus they continued, till by famine and force the city was taken, and then their provocation of the *Romans* to cruelty toward those they had got into their power was so great, that *Titus* was not able to withhold the soldiers from exercising great cruelties toward them.

In short, from the beginning of the siege, to the taking of the city, there were famished and slain by the factions among themselves and by the *Romans* 1100000; the greatest number and with the saddest circumstances, that is to be read of in any story.

Was not this *a time of great tribulation*? Were not these *days of vengeance* indeed? Was there ever a sadder accomplishment of any prediction, than these words of our Saviour had?

And after all this, the temple was burnt and made desolate, the whole city destroyed, and all their whole land seized by the *Roman* emperor, and the remnant of the people in other parts of the nation were prosecuted with great severity. Great numbers of *Jews* were destroyed at the taking of the castle of *Herodion*, and *Machærus*, and *Massada*, and in the thickets or wood of *Jandes*. And there were great slaughters of the *Jews* in other parts, at *Antioch*, in all places about *Alexandria* and *Thebes*, and at *Cyrene*, so that it was visible that there was *wrath upon this people*.

Verse 22. *And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elects sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days;* that is, if those calamities had lasted a little longer, there would not one *Jew* have been left alive; *but for the elects sake*, that is, for the sake of those christians who were left among them, *those days were shortened*: God inclining the heart of *Titus* to shew pity toward the remnant, and not to suffer the nations to exercise any more cruelty toward them; particularly at *Antioch*, (the first seat of the christians) *Josephus* tells us, that when *Titus* came thither, the people petitioned him earnestly, that they might expel the *Jews*, but he told them that was unreasonable, for now their country was laid waste, there was no place for them to go to. Thus we see how *for the elects sake, those days were shortened*.

2. Another circumstance, which was to follow the destruction of *Hierusalem*, was, *The arising of false Christs, and false prophets*, ver. 23, 24. *And then, if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or, lo, he is there! believe him not. For false Christs, and false prophets shall arise, and shall shew signs and wonders.* Such was *Jonathan*, who presently after the destruction of *Hierusalem*, as *Josephus* tells us, drew many into the wilderness of *Cyrene* pretending that he would shew signs and wonders to them; therefore our Saviour adds, ver. 25, 26. *Behold I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, behold he is in the desert; go not forth.* There appeared in *Egypt*, *Crete* and *Cyprus*, several other impostors, who gave themselves out to be *Christs* and false prophets, who applied the prophecies of the old testament to these counterfeit *Messias's*; as they did that of *Balaam* concerning a star coming out of Jacob to *Barchochebas*, because his name signified *the son of a star*. And this was a notorious impostor in the time of *Adrian* the emperor, not many years after the destruction of *Hierusalem*, about 20, (as I remember) *Eusebius* counts; he had a great multitude followed him, which put to death many christians, because they would not renounce Christ, and join with them against the *Romans*, and that was the cause of the death of some hundred thousands of them.

3. Another subsequent circumstance, was the *Jews* being led into captivity, and dispersed into all nations. This St. *Luke* adds, *Luke* xxi. 24. *They shall be led away captive into all nations.* I need not prove this out of history; we see the effect of it to this day.

4. That they should continue in this captivity and dispersed state, and their city remain in the power of the *Gentiles*, until the times of the *Gentiles* were fulfilled. So also St. *Luke* tells us, ver. 24. *They shall be led away captive into all nations, and Hierusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled;* that is, till the gospel have had its course among the nations. And thus it is still with them at this day, *Hierusalem* is in the hands of other nations, and the captivity of the *Jews* continues; and when it shall end, God alone knows.

Having thus explained the particulars of our Saviour's prediction, concerning the destruction of *Hierusalem*, I should in the next place proceed to make some reflections upon this prediction, and its punctual accomplishment; but this I reserve for the following discourse.

S E R M O N CLXXXVI.

The Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

2 C O R. iv. 3 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

I N discoursing on the *fourth* evidence which those who lived in our Saviour's time had of his divine authority, viz. the spirit of prophecy proved to be in him, and made good by the accomplishment of his predictions, I came to consider that remarkable prediction of the destruction of *Hierusalem*. *The seventh Sermon on this Text.*

In doing this, I proposed *three* things:

First, To explain the series and order of this prediction.

Secondly, to consider the particulars of it, as we find them in the 24th of St. *Matthew*, compared with the other two evangelists.

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Third thing I propounded, which was to make some reflections upon this prediction of our Saviour's concerning the destruction of *Hierusalem*, and the punctual accomplishment of it. And now that I have been so large in the explication of this prophecy, I shall make use of this argument farther than I intended, not only to shew that those who lived in that age, and saw our Saviour's prediction so punctually answered by the event, might from hence be satisfied of the prophetic spirit of our Saviour, and consequently of his divine authority; but likewise to shew of what force to the conviction of the *Jews* this consideration is, of

snatching the meat out of one another's mouths, and from their dearest friends, and their very children.

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In doing this, I proposed three things:

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the destruction of *Hierusalem*, and that long train of miserable consequences which followed upon it, and have lasted to this day.

And the reflections I shall make upon this, shall be these :

I. That nothing less than a prophetick spirit could so punctually have foretold so many contingents, and improbable things, as this prediction of our Saviour's does contain in it. Such were some of those signs which did forerun the destruction of *Hierusalem*, as the great famine which happened under *Claudius* ; the several great earthquakes under *Claudius* and *Nero* ; the universal publication of the gospel all over the *Roman* empire, in so short a space ; those wonderful fights, and prodigious signs from heaven, so strange as are not to be parallel'd in any history. And such likewise were the circumstances of the destruction of the city and the temple ; as that it should be an utter desolation, which was strangely accomplished, when, as *Josephus* tells us, the very mountain upon which the temple stood, was almost burnt up and consumed with the fierceness of the fire ; and the *Roman* history gives account of the plucking up of the very foundations of the temple by *Rufus Turnus* : but the most remarkable circumstance of all, which is so fully expressed by our Saviour in this prediction, was the strange and unexampled calamities which should attend this destruction, such as never befel any people before, which our Saviour foretels in these words, *Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, nor ever shall be.* And never had any words a more sad and full accomplishment than this part of our Saviour's prophecy had, in those woful miseries which befel that people by civil and intestine seditions, and the utmost extremity that famine could reduce a people to ; besides the cruelties of a foreign enemy. No history makes mention of so vast a number of men, that in so short a time did perish in such sad circumstances ; fourteen or fifteen hundred thousand within less than a year's space, and more of these by far cruelly murdered by one another's hands than by the *Romans*. So that these were *days of vengeance* and of *great tribulation*, such as the world had never seen before, and *if they had not been shortened, no flesh could have been saved*, as our Saviour adds in the prophecy ; if things had gone on at that rate a little longer, not one of the *Jewish* nation would have been left alive.

Now that our Saviour should foretell so punctually the sad calamity of this people, I take to be one of the most material circumstances of this prophecy, and to be a thing so contingent and unlikely, that it could not have been foreseen, but by divine inspiration. For though one might easily have foretold from the temper of the people, which was prone to sedition, and very impatient of the *Roman* government, that the *Jews* were very likely in a short time to provoke the *Romans* against them ; yet there was no probability at all, that things should have come to that extremity ; for it was not in the design of the *Roman* government to destroy any of their provinces ; but that such a calamity should have happened unto them under *Titus*, who was the mildest, and farthest from cruelty of all mankind, nothing was more unlikely ; that ever any people should have been so befotted, as the *Jews* were at that time, and have so madly conspired together to their own ruin, as they did ; that they should so blindly and obstinately run themselves into such calamities, as made them the pity of their very enemies, was the most incredible thing in the world. Nothing but a prophetick spirit could have foretold an event so contingent, and so extremely improbable.

II. Not only those who lived in that age were capable of satisfaction concerning the accomplishment of this prediction of our Saviour ; but that we also might receive full satisfaction concerning this, the providence of God hath so ordered it, as to preserve to us a more punctual and credible history of the destruction of *Hierusalem*, than there is of any other matter whatsoever so long since done.

And

And this is more considerable, than possibly at first we may imagine.
For,

1. We have this matter related, not by a Christian (who might have been suspected of partiality, and a design to have parallel'd the event with our Saviour's prediction) but by a *Jew* both by nation and religion, who seems designedly to have avoided, as much as possibly he could, the very mention of the christian name, and all particulars relating to our Saviour, tho' no historian was ever more punctual in all other things.

2. We have this matter related by one that was an eye-witness of all those sad calamities that befel the nation of the *Jews*, and during the war in *Galilee*, against *Vespasian*, was one of their chief commanders, and being taken by the *Romans*, was in their camp all the time that *Hierusalem* was besieged.

3. As he was an eye-witness, and so able to give the truest account of those matters, so hath he always had the repute of a most faithful historian. *Joseph Scaliger*, who was a very good judge in these matters, gives this character of him, that he was *Diligentissimus καὶ φιλαληθέστατος*, *omnium Scriptorum*; *The most painful Historian, and the greatest Lover of Truth, of any that he had ever read*; *De quo nos hoc audacter dicimus, non solum in Rebus Judaicis, sed etiam in externis, tutius illi credi quam omnibus Græcis & Latinis Historicis*; Of whom, says he, I might confidently affirm, that not only in the Jewish Affairs, but in all foreign matters, one may more safely rely upon his Credit, than upon all the Greek and Latin Historians put together.

4. There is no ancient history extant, that relates any matter with so much particularity of circumstances, as *Josephus* does this of the Jewish wars, especially the siege and destruction of *Hierusalem*.

5. That the providence of God may appear the more remarkable in this history, which is the only punctual one that hath been preserved down to us of this great action, it will be worth our observation to consider, how remarkably this person was preserved for the writing of this history.

When *Vespasian* made war upon *Galilee*, *Josephus* was chief commander there, and was besieged by *Vespasian*, in the city of *Jotapata*; which, after a long and stout resistance, being taken by the *Romans*, he with forty more hid themselves in a cave, where at last they were discovered by the *Romans*; which *Vespasian* hearing of, sent and offered them life; and *Josephus* would have accepted of their offer, but the rest would not permit him to yield himself, but threatened to kill him; and when by no persuasions he could take them off from this obstinate resolution, he was glad to propound this to them, that they should cast lots two by two, who should die first, and he that had the second lot should kill the first, and the next him, and so on, and the last should kill himself. The providence of God preserved *Josephus* and another to the last lot; and when all the rest were killed, *Josephus* persuaded him to yield himself up to the *Romans*, and so they two escaped with their lives; by which remarkable providence he was preserved to write this history.

III. It seems very plain, from this relation which *Josephus* gives, That the Jewish nation were remarkably devoted by God to destruction, and most fatally hardened and blinded to their own ruin. This *Josephus* every where takes notice of, that there was a sad and black fate hung over the nation, and God seemed to have determined their ruin. And after the destruction of *Hierusalem*, when the castle of *Massada* was besieged by the *Romans*, *Eleazer*, the governor, in his speech to the soldiers, reckons up the sad symptoms of God's displeasure against them; and tells them, that from the beginning of the war it was easy for any one to conjecture that God in great wrath had devoted the nation, which he formerly loved, to destruction.

And indeed all along the hand of God was very visible against them; for when in the beginning of their rebellion, *Cestus Gallus*, the Roman commander, had an

opportunity to have taken *Hierusalem*, and to have put an end to the war; *Josephus* tells us, that God being angry with them, would not permit it, but did reserve them for a greater and sadder destruction. And afterward, when *Vespasian* renewed the war against them, *Josephus* tells us, that he used all kind of earnest persuasion with his countrymen to prevent their ruin, by submitting to the *Roman* government; but they were obstinate, and would not hearken to any moderate counsels. And when the sedition of the zealots began in *Hierusalem*, *Josephus* takes notice, that all the wisest men among them, and those who were most likely, by their interest and moderation, to have saved the city, were first of all cut off by the zealots, so that there were none left to persuade the people to moderate things.

They provoked the *Romans* against them all manner of ways; their seditions among themselves continued when the enemy was before their walls; and when in probability they might have held out so long as to have wearied the *Romans*, by their own seditions they burnt all their granaries, and provisions of corn, and magazines of arms, as if they had consulted the advantage of the *Romans* against themselves; and which was very remarkable, *Josephus* tells us, that before the siege the fountain of *Siloam* was almost dried up, and all the springs about *Hierusalem*, so that water bore a great price; but as soon as *Titus* came before *Hierusalem*, the springs brake out again, and there was never greater plenty; which if it had not happened, the *Roman* armies could very hardly have subsisted. And after the temple was destroyed, when *Titus* would have given *John* and *Simon*, and the rest of the zealots their lives, they would not submit, but were all destroyed by their own obstinacy. At *Massada*, rather than yield to the *Romans*, 900 men, women, and children, killed one another; so that when the *Romans* entered the castle, they found them all dead, except one woman and a child, that had hid themselves.

Philostratus tells us, That when some of the nearer nations would have crowned *Titus* for his victories over the *Jews*, he refused it, saying, That he deserved nothing upon that account, for it was not his work, but God had made him the instrument of his wrath against that people. So that there were never greater acknowledgments of a Divine Hand against any people, than at this time against the *Jews*. Never was there greater courage and contempt of death in any people, and yet they were conquered by numbers much inferior to them. Never was any soldier so merciful as *Titus* was, and so solicitous to have spared the effusion of blood; and yet he was necessitated, against his nature, to exercise great cruelties toward them. Many times he endeavoured, by the most severe inhibitions, to restrain the cruelties of the soldiers towards them; and when he found that they ripped open the bowels of the *Jews* who fled out of *Hierusalem*, in hopes to find gold which they had swallowed, he was much enraged against the soldiers, and would have put all to death that were engaged in that cruelty, but that he found them so many; and notwithstanding this, when he forbade the like cruelty to be exercised for the future, under the most severe penalties, yet *Josephus* says, that the soldiers did not forbear privately to do it; and though in other cases such a severe prohibition would have taken place; yet, says he, because God had devoted that people to ruin, all the ways which *Titus* used for the saving of them, turned to their destruction, *Lib. 6. Cap. 15*. Nay, there was as much blood shed by the dissensions among themselves, between those who desired peace with the *Romans*, and those that would not hearken to it, as by the *Romans*. So much reason was there for that passionate wish of our Saviour's concerning *Hierusalem*, *Ob! that thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes*. Never was

was any nation so infatuated ; never were *the things that tended to peace* so strangely hid from any people as from the *Jews*.

IV. It must needs be, that it was for some very great sin that God sent those dreadful calamities upon that nation. *Josephus* says, that it was sure for some greater impiety than that nation were guilty of, when they were carried away captive to *Babylon*. Nay, he says that the sins of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha* were but small in comparison of those the *Jews* were guilty of ; so that he says, that they were so ripe for destruction, that if the *Roman* army had not come when it did, he did verily believe that either an earthquake would have swallowed up the city, or a deluge overflowed them, or fire from heaven have consumed them ; which is very much the same with that the apostle says of them, *1 Thess. ii. 16*. That they were *filling up the measure of their sins, that wrath might come upon them to the uttermost*.

Now what can we imagine their great sin should be at that time ? All along the history of the old testament, usually, the great sin whereby they provoked God, was their idolatry, for which God sent many judgments upon them, and at last sold them into captivity. But when this desolation came upon them, and for a long time before, even ever after the captivity, they had been free from that great transgression, and were mightily bent against idolatry, so that they would rather die than commit that sin.

The account which *Josephus* gives of their sin, was their intestine seditions, and the cruelties and profanations of the temple that were consequent upon them. But that this could not be the original provocation, is plain, because by the acknowledgment of *Josephus* and the *Jews* themselves, this was the greatest judgment and calamity that came upon them ; yea, much greater than any thing which they suffered by the *Romans* ; yea, so great, that it render'd them the pity of their very enemies ; and when the *Romans* would have granted peace to them, and gladly have put an end to those miseries they saw them involved in, yet they continued their intestine seditions, and would not be taken off from destroying one another.

Let them then give us any probable account, for what great sin it was, that God first gave them up to this great judgment of an industrious endeavour to destroy one another ; or if they cannot, let them believe the account which the history of the new testament gives of it, and the truth whereof was so remarkably confirmed by the fulfilling of our Saviour's predictions against them. The apostle gives a clear account of their sin in the forementioned place, *1 Thess. ii. 15, 16*. that it was because *they had killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and persecuted the apostles* : by these steps they filled up their sins, and wrath came upon them to the uttermost.

V. The punishment that was inflicted upon them hath very shrewd marks and signatures upon it, from which it is easy to conjecture, for what sin it was that they were thus punished. *Titus* laid his siege to *Hierusalem* at the very same time and season that the *Jews* crucified Christ, namely, at the time of the passover ; and the very day that he began his siege, he crucified one before their walls, and afterward, almost the only cruelty that the *Romans* exercised toward them by the command and permission of *Titus*, was crucifixion ; insomuch that sometimes five hundred were crucified in a day, till they wanted wood for crosses. So that they who earnestly cried out against our Saviour, *crucify, crucify*, had at last enough, God made them *eat the fruit of their own ways, and filled them with their own devices* : and they who had bought Christ for thirty pieces of silver, were afterward themselves sold at a lower rate.

VI. Their religion was remarkably struck at, and affronted, as if God intended to put an end to that dispensation, and to abrogate their law. Most of their great calamities happened to them upon the sabbath-day, and upon their great festivals. *Cestius Gallus* sat down with his army before *Hierusalem* on the sabbath. *Titus* besieged them at the time of the passover. And *Hierusalem* was taken, (as *Dio* in his *Roman* history observes) on the sabbath-day, that day for which the *Jews* have so great a veneration. The zealots profaned the temple by making it a garrison, and by the rapine and bloodshed committed in it; they brought the priesthood into contempt, by chusing the meanest of the people into the highest offices; they turned the materials of the temple into instruments of war. The *Romans* themselves were as much grieved to see how the *Jews* profaned the temple, as the *Jews* themselves ought to have been, if it had been so profaned by the *Romans*; they are the very words of *Josephus*. And though *Titus* gave express orders, and used great endeavours to have saved the temple, and hazarded himself to have quenched it when it was on fire; yet he could not do it, but it was burnt to the ground: and afterward when the priests came to him, and supplicated to him for their lives, contrary to his usual clemency, he commanded them to be slain, saying they came too late; that it was fit they should perish with the temple, and now that was destroyed, for the sake of which they should have been saved, he saw no reason to spare them. Afterward the *Roman* ensigns were set up upon the ruins of the temple, and the soldiers sacrificed to them; and their law was carried in triumph at *Rome* before *Vespasian* and *Titus*.

These were as great signs as could be, that God had a design to abrogate and put a period to that administration; especially if we take in this, which *Ammianus Marcellinus* a heathen historian tells us, that this temple could never be rebuilt, though it was attempted by the *Jews* several times, and that whenever they went about to lay the foundation, fire broke out of the foundation, and consumed the workmen.

I will add but one circumstance more, to shew that that dispensation was at an end. God seemed to have wholly given over his particular care of that people, and to have no longer regard to the covenant made with them, in which he had promised, that when they came up three times a year, from all parts of the land, to serve the Lord, he would so order things by his providence, that the enemy should make no advantage of their absence from their borders; nay, the enemy should not then desire their land: and yet notwithstanding this, at the time of the passover, when the whole nation were met at *Hierusalem*, *Titus* came upon them, and enclosed them all in the city.

VII. And lastly, Consider how God hath pursued the *Jews* with great severity ever since, making them to be stigmatized and hated in all nations; great cruelties and oppressions have frequently been exercised toward them; and by a strange providence, God hath kept them distinct from other people, that they might remain as a monument of his displeasure; and considering how other colonies of people have fallen in, and been mixed with the inhabitants in an age or two, so as they never could be kept distinct for any long time; that the *Jews* for 1600 years should still remain so, as it is an argument of the special providence of God, so it is one of the most material and standing evidences of the truth of our religion, that they should remain still as witnesses of the old testament; and as monuments of the destruction of *Hierusalem*, and the fierce wrath which God executed upon them for the crucifying of Christ.

Upon the whole matter, if so particular a prediction as this of our Saviour's concerning the destruction of *Hierusalem*, so punctually answered by the event, be not an argument of divine inspiration, then there can be no evi-

dence

dence of any such thing as a spirit of prophecy. For what greater evidence of a true prophet, than to foretell so many things, so contingent and improbable; all which have accordingly afterward fallen out, just as they were foretold?

Suppose the *Jews* say true, that *Jesus Christ* was an impostor, and consequently justly put to death by them: what greater reflection upon the providence of God can be imagined, than that this person should be permitted to foretell, that such and such calamities should befall those that had put him to death, as a punishment upon them for that sin; and afterward all this should happen in so remarkable a manner, as the world cannot give the like instance? Is it in the least credible, that the divine providence should permit such things, as of necessity will give credit to an impostor, and would be good evidence to a prudent and considerate man, that he was divinely inspired?

I have now done with the *fourth* head of our Saviour's predictions, namely, his prophecy of the destruction of *Hierusalem*; which I have been the longer upon, because it is so considerable an evidence of the truth of our religion, and so strong an argument against the *Jews*, that if they are not wrought upon by the consideration of the accomplishment of this prediction of our Saviour's, and the great severity of God still continued toward that nation, it can be ascribed to nothing but the just judgment of God, still *hiding the things of their peace from their eyes*, and giving them up to the same kind of fatal hardness and blindness, which sixteen hundred years ago was the cause of their destruction.

There remains yet one instance more of our Saviour's prophetick spirit, which I must reserve for another discourse.

S E R M O N CLXXXVII.

The Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

2 C O R. iv. 3, 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

I AM still upon the *fourth* evidence, which those who lived in our Saviour's time, had of his divine authority, *viz.* the spirit of prophecy proved to be in him, and made good by the accomplishment of his predictions. *Four instances* I have already given, and now proceed to the

Fifth and last instance I shall give of our Saviour's prophetick spirit, *viz.* in those predictions which foretel the fate of the gospel in the world; what discouragements and difficulties the first publishers of the gospel should meet with from

from the persecutions which the powers of the world should stir up against them, and from the rising of false Christs and false prophets; what assistance they should find in the carrying on the work; and what success the gospel should have, notwithstanding the opposition that should be made against it. I shall speak briefly to these.

I. What discouragements and difficulties the first publishers of the gospel should meet with. Our Saviour foretels *two* great discouragements.

1. From the persecutions which the powers of the world should stir up against them. This our Saviour gave his disciples early notice of, when he first called them together, and sent them forth, *Matth. x. 16, 17, 18. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake. And verse 21, 22. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.* And that the disciples might not be surprized with this, when it should happen, as an unexpected thing, a little before his death, when he foretold the destruction of *Hierusalem*, he repeats this prediction to them again, as you may see, *Matth. xxiv. 9. Then they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And Luke xxi. 12. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.*

And all this we find punctually fulfilled in those persecutions that they met with at *Hierusalem*, and in other places where-ever they went to preach the gospel, as you may read at large in the history of the *Acts* of the apostles. And afterward in the persecutions raised against the christians by the *Roman* emperors, where all kinds of cruelties and tortures were exercised upon them, and the christians killed by thousands in a day, as if they would have destroyed the very name of Christ out of the world, as every one knows that is acquainted with ecclesiastical history.

Particularly he foretold the two sons of *Zebedee*, *James* and *John*, that they should be put to death. *Matth. xx. 23. saith he unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. And this accordingly happened to them, for we find, Acts xii. 2. that James was slain by Herod. Indeed St. John lived a great while after, as our Saviour foretold, John xxi. 22. that John should tarry till he came; that is, he should live till the destruction of Hierusalem, which is very frequently in the evangelists called Christ's coming; and so he did, and at last was put to death by the sword, as St. Chrysostom saith; though Justin, Irenæus, Clemens Alex. say nothing of it; and Origin and Tertullian say he died another death.*

He likewise foretold *Peter* what kind of death he should die; namely, that when he was old, he should be crucified, *John xxi. 18, 19. Verily, verily I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. And the evangelist adds, This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And accordingly, he was crucified about forty years after, as Eusebius tells us, and several of the fathers.*

2. Another great discouragement which our Saviour foretold they should meet with in the publishing of the gospel, was, from the rising of false Christs and false prophets. This our Saviour foretells, in the 24th of St. Matthew, verse 5, 24. That many should come in his name, and should deceive many; that there should arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shew great signs and wonders; insomuch, that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect. And this I have already shewn was fulfilled in those

many

many impostors that rose up among the *Jews*, pretending themselves to be *Messias's*, and drawing many people after them, both before and after the destruction of *Hierusalem*; and in *Simon* and the other heads of the *Gnostick* sect, who did great prejudice to christianity, by turning the grace of God into wantonness, and abusing the holy doctrine of our Saviour to all manner of licentiousness, and drawing of christians, not only to loose and filthy practices, but to a denial of the gospel for fear of persecution, and at last to join with the heathens in the persecuting of the christians.

II. Our Saviour likewise foretold what assistance the apostles should find in the carrying on their work. He promised that *he would be with them* in the preaching of the gospel, *Matth. xxviii. 20.* More particularly before his ascension, he told them that they should receive power by the coming of the Holy Ghost upon them, whereby they should be qualified to be witnesses unto him, in *Judaea, and Hierusalem, and Samaria, and to the utmost parts of the earth, Acts i. 8.* And *Matth. x. 19. 20.* Our Saviour promiseth that his Spirit should direct them what to say, when they should be accused before kings and governors: *When they deliver you up, take no thought how, or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak: for it is not you that speak; but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.* And again to the same purpose, he encourageth them a little before his death, *Luke xxi. 14, 15.* *Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.*

And all this we find was made good to them after our Saviour's ascension. They were wonderfully assisted, and carried on above themselves in the preaching of the gospel. So the evangelist *St. Mark* tells us, *Mark xvi. 20.* That the apostles *went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.* And all along in the history of the *Acts*, we find, that they were extraordinarily strengthened and assisted in the publishing of the gospel. And particularly our Saviour's prediction and promise was made good to *St. Stephen*, of whom it is said, *Acts vi. 10.* that when he was disputing with the *Jews*, *they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.*

III. Our Saviour foretold also what success the gospel should have, notwithstanding all the opposition that should be made against it; that it should be published in all nations, *Matth. xxiv. 14.* and in despite of all the malice of the *Jews*, and the potent opposition that the *Gentiles* should make against the publishers of the gospel, they should make disciples in every nation, and bear witness unto Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth, *Matth. xxviii. 19.* and *Acts i. 8.* That he would build his church upon a rock, and the gates of hell should not prevail against it, *Matth. xvi. 18.* And this we find was done with great success, both among the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as appears out of the history of the *Acts* of the apostles, and other histories of the first ages of the church.

Particularly our Saviour foretold, that that act of kindness which *Mary* shewed to him, in anointing his head with precious ointment, should be remembered where-ever the gospel was preached, *Matth. xxvi. 13.* *Verily, I say unto you, where-soever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.* And accordingly this little particular history hath every where been propagated with the gospel, and the fame of it hath spread as far as the notice of christianity.

And thus I have done with the fourth and last evidence of our Saviour's divine authority, namely, the prophetick spirit, which was proved to be in him, and made good by the punctual accomplishment of his predictions. I shall only shew that these instances which I have given, are clear arguments of a prophetick spirit in our Saviour. And this will appear, if we consider these two things:

First, That all these things which our Saviour foretold, were purely contingent in respect of us, that is, there was no necessity that they should come to

pass; and consequently nothing but infinite knowledge could certainly foresee that they would.

Secondly, All or most of them, were not only contingent, but exceedingly unlikely; there was no probability that they should happen; and consequently, no one could reasonably and prudently have foreseen that they would. And these two things being made out, will abundantly evidence, that the foretelling of these things doth argue a prophetick spirit in our Saviour; and consequently his divine authority. Things that have necessary causes, if those causes be evident, any one may foretell that they will be; things that are probable, and likely to happen, every prudent man may reasonably conjecture that they will be, and consequently may in many cases successfully foretell them without a spirit of prophecy: but such things as in respect of us are purely contingent, and depend upon no necessary causes we know of, especially if they be withal unlikely to come to pass, no man can foretell but by the inspiration of that Spirit, whose infinite wisdom knows all things; and this is the true reason why the foretelling of future contingents hath always been looked upon as an argument of inspiration.

First, These things which our Saviour foretold, were purely contingent; that is, there was no necessity in human reason that they should come to pass; and consequently no man without inspiration could certainly foretell them. Those things are said to be contingent in respect of us, which have no necessary cause that we know of; particularly those things which depend upon the will of free agents, either the will of men, or of God. And such were those things which our Saviour foretold; many of them depended upon the will of men, whether they should happen or not, supposing the permissive will of God, that is, that God had determined not to interpose and hinder them.

The death of Christ, with all the wicked and opprobrious circumstances of it, depended upon the will of men; and therefore it was a thing that no man could foresee whether it would be or not. So likewise the resistance and opposition that was made to the gospel by the persecutions of men, and the malice of false prophets, did depend upon the wills of men.

But many of these events depended purely upon the will of God, which no man could foreknow, unless he did reveal it to him; and if he did, this was an argument of inspiration, which is the thing we are contending for. Of this kind were the resurrection of our Saviour from the dead; his being taken up into heaven: the miraculous powers and gifts wherewith the apostles and primitive christians were endowed; the fatal destruction of *Hierusalem* and the *Jewish* nation, contrary to the design of those who brought it to pass; the prevalency of the gospel in the world, in despite of all opposition made against it. All these were brought to pass in a more immediate manner by the power of God, and therefore depended purely upon his will.

Secondly, Most of the things which our Saviour foretold, were not only purely contingent in respect of us, and therefore could not without inspiration be certainly foreseen; but were also exceedingly unlikely, and improbable in themselves, and therefore could not so much as prudently have been conjectured. And to make this out more fully, I shall run over the several instances of our Saviour's predictions, and shew how unlikely the things which he foretold, were to have come to pass: and if this appear, it must be granted that our Saviour was a prophet.

1. Our Saviour's prediction concerning his own death and sufferings was a thing very unlikely to have come to pass. It was very likely that the pharisees and chief priests, whose interest was so much struck at, should have malice enough against him, to design his ruin; but that ever they should have accomplished it without a popular tumult and sedition, was very unlikely, considering the esteem and favour he had among the people. Who could have believed that the *Jews*, who had seen so many of his miracles, and received so great benefits by them, who were such admirers of his doctrine, and so astonished at it, who *would have made him king*, should ever have consented to have put him to death? Who could have thought that so soon after they had so unanimously brought him to *Hierusalem* in triumph with such *Hosannas* and acclamations, the same people should have been so eager to have him crucified? I know

know there is nothing more inconstant, than the giddy and fickle multitude; nothing less to be relied upon than the opinion and applause of the people: but because the humour of the people is so uncertain; therefore for this reason it was hard to prophesy what they would do. And nothing was more improbable, than that any should certainly foretell where this humour would at last fix and settle. Nay, it was very unlikely that they who had been raised to so great and just an esteem of him, from a clear conviction of his innocence and holiness, and of the divine power which attended him, should have had either the wickedness, or the confidence to have gone about to compass the death of so innocent and divine a person.

And it is very remarkable, that this was a thing so incredible to the disciples, that though our Saviour did several times, in the plainest words that could be, tell them of his death and sufferings; yet they could not *understand* it; that is, it could by no means sink into them, they could not apprehend that ever any such thing should come to pass, *Mark ix. 31, 32. For he taught his disciples and said unto them, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and after that he is killed he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.* And *Luke ix. 43, 44, 45.* after our Saviour had done a great miracle, it is said, *they were all amazed at the mighty power of God: but while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not; and they feared to ask him of that saying.* They looked upon it as a thing incredible, that he who did such works, and was attended with such a divine power, should ever be *delivered into the hands of men*; if men should be so malicious as to design his death, yet it was not credible that God should give up such a person into their hands. And again, a little before his sufferings, he inculcates this more particularly upon them, *Luke xviii. 31, 32, 33, 34. Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, behold, we go up to Hierusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spit upon; and they shall scourge him, and put him to death. And then it is said of the disciples, that they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.* What was the matter? Could any thing have been said in plainer words, than our Saviour's declaring this to them? No certainly, they understood very well the meaning of those words; for it is said, *Matth xvii. 23. that when he said this to them, they were exceeding sorry, they were very much troubled to hear him say this; they understood very well what the words signified, and they were troubled at the first appearance and literal sense of them; but it seems they took them to be a parable, and to have some allegorical meaning hidden under them; for they could not imagine, that ever they should be literally true. And that this was their apprehension, seems to be sufficiently intimated by both the evangelists, St. Mark and St. Luke, who after they had told us, that the disciples understood not this saying, they immediately add, that they feared to ask Christ of this saying, that is, they did not understand whether they were to take this saying in the obvious and literal sense of it; or to look upon it as an allegory, or a parable that had some hidden sense; but being troubled at the saying, because the literal and obvious sense had a great deal of horror, they were afraid to ask our Saviour the meaning of it, (as they used always to ask him the meaning of his parables) for fear he should tell them that he intended it literally. Now from this it appears, how unlikely it seemed to the disciples, that our Saviour should suffer such things as he foretold of himself.*

2. Our Saviour's predictions concerning his rising again out of the grave the third day; concerning his being taken up into heaven; concerning the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, in such miraculous powers and gifts after his ascension, were all things very unlikely and incredible, because so exceeding strange, and above the common course of nature. We look upon it

as a wonderful thing for a man certainly to foretell an ordinary thing: but if any man should tell us, that after he was dead, and had lain three days in the grave, he should rise again, and be visibly taken up into heaven, and from thence bestow miraculous gifts upon men, and this should accordingly come to pass; it were impossible not to think this man a prophet.

3. Our Saviour's prediction concerning the fatal destruction of *Hierusalem* and the *Jewish* nation, was very unlikely. But this I spake to at large, when I explained the prophecy.

4. The fate which our Saviour foretold the gospel should have in the world, was a thing very improbable. That it should meet with great opposition and persecution was not strange; nothing being more likely than that a religion which was new to the world, so contrary to the principles of those who had been educated in another religion, and so opposite to the interests of men, should be opposed and resisted to the utmost: but then there are these *three* things very strange, which our Saviour foretold should attend the publication of the gospel.

(1.) That an action of no greater consideration than that was of *Mary's* anointing our Lord's head, and done privately, should be celebrated through the world in all ages; and the memory of it should be as far, and as long propagated, as the most famous actions of the greatest prince that ever was in the world.

(2.) This was strange and unlikely, which our Saviour likewise foretold, that false Christs, and false prophets and teachers should arise after his death; that after the *Jews* had been so severe to our Saviour, for giving out himself to be the *Messias*, though he gave such convincing evidence of it, this should not deter counterfeiters from assuming so dangerous a person; and that when christianity was persecuted, there should arise false apostles, and false teachers that should pretend to christianity, when it was so odious a profession; that any should be found that should dissemble in a matter so full of hazard and danger; this was very strange and unlikely.

But because this prediction of our Saviour's concerning false Christs and false prophets is aspersed by the atheists, and particularly by *Vaninus*, as one of the most cunning and crafty actions that our Saviour did; as if after he had let himself into a reputation and esteem in the world, he had designed by this prediction to bolt the door against all others; therefore it will be requisite that I speak a little more particularly to this.

1. It is acknowledged by the atheists themselves, particularly by *Vaninus*, that it does not appear that our Saviour carried on any worldly design. Why then should he be suspected of it in this matter, which is capable of a good interpretation; when his whole life, and all the actions of it, do clear him of any such suspicion? But because it is said, that though he carried on no design for riches and power, yet he had a deep design to gain reputation and fame to himself in after-ages; therefore I shall add one or two considerations more, to shew how unreasonable, and how perfectly malicious this jealousy is.

2. Let us consider then, that this prediction of his would either be accomplished or not; but whether it was, or was not, it can be no argument of any design of vain glory. If it had not come to pass (as I have shewn it was very unlikely it should, especially within the compass of the time which he had prefixed for it) then he had been a false prophet, and so he had lost his reputation, by the very means whereby he intended to have established it, which I do not understand the craft and cunning of: for either he knew certainly that it would come to pass, or not; if he did, he was a true prophet; if he did not, he did not do politickly, in putting his reputation upon such a hazard.

3. If we suppose him, as this objection does, to have been an impostor, and consequently not to have believed his own doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and another life after this; what an apparent madness had it been to neglect the present advantages of this world, which he was capable of enjoying; and to lay out for a fame and reputation, after he was dead and extinguished, and consequently when he should not be capable of having any sense and enjoyment of it!

And the instance of the *Romans*, who ventured their lives out of vain-glory, to get a name after they were dead, will avail nothing in this case : because it plainly appears from all the heathen writers, that they did this upon a presumption of their immortality, and a persuasion that they should live in another world, and enjoy the pleasure of the fame by which their names should be celebrated in this world : but had they not been persuaded of this, it would have been the greatest folly in the world, to have ventured their lives to gain a fame after death, and to be spoken of with honour when they were not, and consequently could take no pleasure in it. This may suffice to be said in short, to this malicious and absurd objection. But,

(3.) This was strange and unlikely, that the gospel should have such success in the world. And the more likely it was, that it should meet with so much opposition and resistance, the more unlikely was it that it should prevail, especially by such means, and in such manner as it did ; that a few unlearned men, destitute of secular arts and learning, opposed by all the wit and power that the world could exert, should be able in the space of a few years to propagate and plant all over the known world a doctrine so despised and persecuted, so contrary to the almost invincible prejudice of education in another religion, so opposite to those two great governours of the world, the lusts and the interests of men ; nothing could have been foretold so unlikely and improbable as this is ; especially if we take in this, that the chief instrument of spreading this doctrine in the world, was the fiercest opposer and persecutor of it, I mean *St. Paul*, who by a light and voice from heaven, was taken off from persecuting christianity, and became the most active and zealous instrument of its propagation. The wonderful success and prevalency of the gospel by such means, and in such circumstances of difficulty, and potent opposition made against it, are a plain indication, that this doctrine was assisted and countenanced from heaven ; that *it was of God, and therefore could not be overthrown*. Nothing but the mighty force of truth could, naked and unarm'd, have done such wonders in the world.

And thus I have, I hope, fully shewn that those who lived in the age of our Saviour, were capable of having sufficient assurance, that Jesus Christ who declared the christian religion to the world, was sent of God. From the prophecies concerning him ; the testimonies that were given him by an immediate voice from heaven ; the miracles that were wrought by him, and on his behalf ; and by the prophetick spirit, that gave evidence of his inspiration. And if any one doubt whether he gave these testimonies of his divine authority to the world, let him consider that it is almost as great a miracle as any of those, that a doctrine preached by one that gave no testimony of his divine authority to the world, should be so strangely propagated, and maintain its possession so long in the world ; I say, let him consider this, and methinks this should convince him of the truth of christianity.

S E R M O N CLXXXVIII.

The Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

*The ninth
Sermon on
this Text.*

I N discoursing of the evidence of our Saviour's divine authority, I proposed the considering *three things*.

First, What evidence they had, who heard the doctrine of the gospel immediately from our Saviour.

Secondly, What evidence they had, who received this doctrine by the preaching of the apostles.

Thirdly, What evidence after ages have, until the present time.

The *first* of these I have handled at large; and now proceed to the

Second, viz. To consider what assurance those who heard the doctrine of Christ from the apostles, were capable of having concerning his divine authority: and of this I shall give you an account in these *three* particulars.

First, They had all the assurance concerning this matter, which men can have of any thing from the testimony of credible eye and ear-witnesses.

Secondly, They had this testimony confirmed by miracles.

Thirdly, They had yet a farther evidence of the divinity of this doctrine, from the wonderful prevalency and success of it, by such improbable and unlikely means.

First, Those who received the doctrine of Christ from the apostles, had all the assurance of Christ's divine authority, that men can have of any thing from the testimony of credible eye and ear-witnesses. The apostles who immediately conversed with our Saviour, and heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, they had the testimony of their own senses for his divine authority; they heard and saw the attestations which God gave to him: and those to whom the apostles preached, received all this from them, as from eye and ear-witnesses. So that those who received the doctrine of Christ from the apostles, had all the arguments which the apostles had, to satisfy them concerning Christ's divine authority, only they were not conveyed to them in so immediate a manner. The apostles saw and heard those things themselves, which gave them satisfaction that *Jesus Christ* came from God: those to whom the apostles preached, received these things from their testimony.

And this also was a sufficient ground of assurance, as will clearly appear, if we can make out these *two* things.

I. That the apostles were credible witnesses. And,

II. That if they were so, then their testimony was sufficient to persuade belief.

I. That the apostles were credible witnesses. Of their knowledge there can be no question, because they gave testimony only of what themselves had seen and heard: so that if they falsified in any thing, it could not be for want of sufficient knowledge, but for want of fidelity. Now those who heard them, had all the arguments that could be to satisfy them of their fidelity. They delivered things plain-ly

ly, and without artificial insinuations; they all agreed in their testimony, and were always constant to themselves in the same relation; there was no visible interest to sway them in the least to falsify against their knowledge; they gained nothing by it; nay, so far were they from that, that they run themselves hereby upon the greatest hazards and disadvantages; and, which is the highest evidence that this world can give of any man's sincerity, they ventured their lives for this testimony, and sealed it with their blood. For though martyrdom be no sufficient argument of the truth of that for which a man lays down his life, yet it is a very good argument of a man's sincerity; it signifies that a man is in earnest, and believes himself; and if the thing be not true, yet that he thinks it to be so, otherwise he would not have died for it: so that if we have no reason to doubt of the knowledge of those witnesses, (as certainly we have no reason, the things which they testified being plain matters, what they saw and heard, in which every man knows whether he speaks truth or not; I say, if we have no reason to doubt of their knowledge) we cannot question their integrity and sincerity, having the highest evidence of that, which this world can afford: for there cannot be a better argument of the integrity of witnesses, than to lay down their lives for their testimony.

II. If the apostles were credible witnesses, then was their testimony sufficient to persuade belief. For what greater evidence can any man have of any thing which himself has not seen, than to receive it from credible eye-witnesses, that is, from such persons as we have all the reason in the world to judge worthy of credit? This evidence men are contented to accept in other cases, as sufficient to induce belief; and if we will not accept it in matters of religion, we are very partial and unjust. We find that upon the evidence of credible witnesses men generally proceed with good assurance in human affairs: the chief temporal interests of men, of their estates and reputation, and lives, are determined upon no better evidence than this. Now if in matters of religion we will reject the evidence which shall be sufficient to sway our assent in other things, it is a plain sign that we have less mind to religion than to other things; that we have some interest or pique against it; otherwise we would not refuse to yield an equal assent, where the evidence is equal.

This reason tells us; and our Saviour in effect says the same thing, when he chargeth those who rejected this evidence of credible witnesses with the sin of unbelief: *Mark xvi. 14. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.* But now if the testimony of credible witnesses be not a sufficient ground of faith, it could have been no sin in the disciples, not to believe those who had seen Christ risen from the dead.

Secondly, Those who received the doctrine of Christ from the apostles, had not only the testimony of credible witnesses, but they had this testimony confirmed by miracles. Because the apostles were to go abroad into the world, and to preach to many who never saw nor knew them before, and consequently had no reason at first to believe their testimony, till they were satisfied of the value of the witnesses; and this would require long time, and frequent conversation, so that the gospel must have made but a very slow progress at this rate: and because they were like to meet with great opposition from the powers and wits of the world, from the prejudices of education, and from the lusts and interests of men; therefore for the speedier and more effectual propagation of the gospel, God was pleased to confirm this testimony by miracles, to endue those who were to preach the gospel to the world, with miraculous powers and gifts, of speaking all languages, and healing diseases, and casting out devils: of foretelling things to come, and raising the dead; that being accompanied with these visible and sensible signs of the divine presence and power, their testimony might more easily be believed.

And that this was the end of those miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, the scripture frequently tells us. Hence it is that our Saviour forbade them to preach the gospel abroad, till they were furnished with this power, *Luke xxiv. 49. But tarry ye in the city of Hierusalem, until ye be indued with power from on high.* And *Acts i. 8.* our Saviour tells the apostles before his ascension, *But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me in Hierusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and to the utmost parts*
of

of the earth. This was that which qualified them to be witnesses to Christ, and which gave confirmation to their testimony. So St. Mark tells us, *Mark xvi. 20. And they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.* To the same purpose the apostle to the Hebrews, *ch. ii. 3, 4.* speaking of the publishing of the gospel, *How shall we escape,* says he, *if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?* What was the confirmation that was given to it? It follows in the next words, *God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.* The apostles bare witness of Christ, and God bare witness to them, by those miraculous powers and gifts, that their testimony was true.

Thirdly, Those who received the doctrine of Christ from the apostles, had yet a farther evidence of the divinity of this doctrine, from the wonderful success and prevalency of it, by such improbable and unlikely means. Had the doctrine of Christ's religion been suited to the corruptions of men, and stolen insensibly into the world, and prevailed by degrees in the revolution of many ages, as the heathen superstition and idolatry did, which met with no opposition from the lusts and interests of men, it then had been no strange thing: or had it been planted by power and force of arms, as the religion of *Mahomet* was, then indeed the success of it had been no argument that it was from God. Had it been set off with all imaginable advantages of wit and eloquence, as the philosophy of the heathens was; and had it been entertained by a few more sublime spirits, and those who were more studious and contemplative, and whose understandings were elevated above the common pitch, this might have been looked upon but as human and ordinary, and according to the common and usual course of things. But that a doctrine which was so opposite to the lusts and inclinations of men, which was persecuted and opposed by all the powers of the world, despised and condemned by the witty part of mankind; that a doctrine, the profession whereof did expose men to so many worldly inconveniencies, to so many dangers and sufferings, to derision and to death, should be planted by a few mean and inconsiderable men, destitute of all secular power, and advantages of human learning and eloquence; and in so short a time be so vastly propagated, and so generally entertained by all sorts of men, rich and poor, philosophers and illiterate; this was extraordinary, and can be attributed to nothing else but a divine power accompanying it, and bearing it up against the power and malice of men. That the doctrine of the gospel delivered to the world by mean persons, with so much simplicity and plainness, should so strangely affect the hearts of men, and be of so admirable a force to stir up and inflame men to piety and virtue, seems to me a very plain argument of its divinity: for we do not find that any doctrine that was merely human, had ever any considerable power upon the minds of men, where it was not set off with the arts of speech and charms of eloquence: and then it only produceth some present motions and heats; but seldom hath any lasting and permanent effect, such as the christian religion hath had in the world.

Thus I have shewn what assurance those who received the doctrine of the gospel from the apostles, were capable of having, concerning the divinity of this doctrine, and the divine authority of the persons who declared it to the world.

Thirdly, I am to consider what assurance after-ages, down to this day, are capable of having concerning this matter: and this principally concerns us, who live at the distance of so many ages from the first revelation of the gospel. Of this I shall give you an account in these *two* particulars.

First, We have an authentick and credible account of this doctrine, and of the confirmation which was in the first ages given to it, transmitted down to us.

Secondly, The effects of this doctrine still remain in the world.

First, We have a credible and authentick account of this doctrine, and of the confirmation which in the first ages was given to it, transmitted down to us. I told you at first, that there are but these *three* ways whereby we can be assured of matters of fact.

1. By the immediate testimony of our own senses, if we ourselves be present when the thing is done or spoken, and see and hear it.

2. By the testimony of credible eye or ear-witnesses of it. Or,

3. By

3. By a credible account or relation of it transmitted to us. And all these ways, in their kind, are accounted sufficient to give men an undoubted assurance of matter of fact. No man doubts of what he himself sees or hears: men generally believe many things which they have not opportunity of seeing themselves, if they be attested to them by credible eye-witnesses: and for things that were done long ago, and which no man now alive was witness of, men are abundantly satisfied by a credible relation transmitted down to them. Upon this account men do firmly believe, that *Alexander* about two thousand years ago conquered a great part of the world; and that there was such a person as *Julius Cæsar*, who seventeen hundred years ago conquered *England*; and the like. Now if we have the doctrine and history of the gospel, and all the evidences of our Saviour's divine authority, conveyed down to us, in as credible a manner as any of these ancient matters of fact are, which mankind do most firmly believe, then we have sufficient ground to be assured of it.

Now there are but two ways imaginable whereby the doctrine of Christ's religion and the evidences of its divinity can be conveyed down to us, either by oral report and tradition, or by books and writing. The former of these the experience of the world hath shewn to be very uncertain, and in the succession of many ages liable to great changes and hazard. Hence it is that the prudence of mankind, and the necessity of human affairs, have introduced the latter way of conveying the memory of things to after-ages, namely, by writing and records: and the good God likewise in his wise providence hath taken care, that those who were eye and ear-witnesses of our Saviour's doctrine and life, should commit to writing the history and relation of those matters, that so the memory of them might be preserved to all generations; and these books which we call *the holy scriptures*, are the authentick records of our religion, without which christian religion in probability had long since either been strangely corrupted, or wholly lost out of the world. For that oral report would not have preserved it, there is this evidence, sufficient to convince any man that is not obstinately resolved to the contrary, that of all the persons that formerly lived in the world, and the great actions that have been done, besides what are recorded in history, and of the innumerable miracles of our Saviour, which were not written in the books of the gospel: I say, of all these, oral tradition hath preserved nothing; so that if the doctrine of the christian religion, and the history of the life and actions of our Saviour and the apostles, had not been put into a surer way of conveyance than that of oral tradition, in all probability before this time there would have been left no certain monuments of them in the world.

And that we may understand how much these latter ages are indebted to the wisdom and goodness of God, that he hath furnished us with so fixed and certain a way of being acquainted with his will, with the doctrine and grounds of our religion, I might represent to you what advantages this standing revelation of the scripture hath above that way of oral tradition; yea, though the revelation of the gospel had been renewed every two or three ages. But this has been done in some former discourses*. I therefore proceed to the other ground of assurance, which the ages after the apostles are capable of having, viz.

* See Vol.
I. Serm.

Secondly, The effect of this doctrine still remains in the world. Christian religion is still professed in several nations, and is entertained by a considerable part of the world: and allowing for the difference between the extraordinary assistance which at first accompanied the gospel, and was necessary for the planting of it, and the more human and ordinary ways whereby it is now propagated, it hath considerable effects upon the hearts and lives of men.

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It might justly indeed be expected, considering the reasonableness of the christian religion, and the great evidence we have of the truth and divinity of it, that it should have a greater force and power upon men, than it hath in most parts of Christendom; but we cannot reasonably expect in a prosperous state of christianity, those extraordinary heats and fervours which the primitive christians had whilst they were under continual persecution: we cannot reasonably expect that unity among christians, and that they should be so generally and universally good, as they were under a state of persecution; for common sufferings have a strange force to unite men, and to endear them to one another: in times of persecution

it might be expected that all or most of those who profess themselves christians, should be really so: when a profession is dangerous to those that make it, and attended with persecutions, then there will be but few pretenders to it; scarce any man will dissemble to the hazard of his life: but when any religion flourisheth, and is prosperous, when it is an odious thing, and against a man's interest not to profess it, then it may justly be feared that there will be great numbers of hypocrites, of those who in compliance with the fashion, and the prevailing interest, will take upon them the outward profession of it.

But however we see the same effects of christianity still remain in the world: Christ is still owned as the true *Messias* and *the Son of God*; his doctrine acknowledged to be true, and to have been from God; so that thus far his promise hath been made good of *building his church upon a rock*, and that *the gates of hell should not prevail against it*. That christianity hath uninterruptedly continued for above sixteen hundred years, is an additional evidence of the divinity of this doctrine, which the first ages of the world could not have: only this is sadly to be bewailed, that this religion, which hath all imaginable confirmation given to the truth of it, should have no greater effect upon the lives of men; that when we have so much reason to assent to it, yet so few can be persuaded to practise it; that when we make so many solemn professions of our belief of the truth of it, yet by the actions of our lives, we should so visibly contradict the articles of our belief.

Thus I have gone thro' the *first* thing I proposed to be considered in my text, *viz.* the full and clear evidence which we have of the truth of the gospel, and particularly of the divine authority of that person, who declared the christian religion to the world. There are *two* other general heads which the text would lead us to consider, which I shall but briefly treat of, and so conclude this subject.

The *second* thing considerable in the words is, the cause of the infidelity of men, notwithstanding all the evidence which the gospel carries along with it; which the apostle expresseth in these words, *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

In speaking to this, I shall do these *four* things.

First, Shew why the infidelity of men is attributed to the Devil, as the cause of it.

Secondly, Shew more particularly what influence the Devil hath upon the minds of men to keep them in unbelief.

Thirdly, That this doth not excuse the infidelity of men.

Fourthly, Shew the wickedness and unreasonableness of infidelity.

First, Why the infidelity of men is attributed to the Devil, as the cause of it. There are *two* principles that bear sway in the world, and have a more immediate influence upon the mind of man; the holy spirit of God, and the Devil. The former of these is continually moving and inclining them to good: the latter swaying and tempting them to evil; and these *two* principles share mankind between them. Hence it is that in scripture the Spirit of God is said to *dwell* in good men; and the wicked and vicious part of mankind, (whom the scripture frequently calls the world) are said to be in the possession of the Devil, and to belong to his share and lot. Upon this account the Devil is called in the text *the God of this world*. Accordingly St. *John* frequently rangeth mankind under these *two* heads; those that belong to God, and those that belong to the Devil, 1 *John* iii. 8. *He that committeth sin is of the Devil: but he that committeth not sin, is born of God.* In the next verse he calleth them the *children of God*, and the *children of the Devil*: in this the *children of God* are manifest, and the *children of the Devil*. So likewise chap. v. 19. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* Or as the words may be rendered more suitably to the opposition which the apostle aims at, *the whole world is subject to the wicked one; we are of God, but the rest of the world is subject to the Devil.*

Upon this account it is, that in the constant phrase of scripture all good motions and inclinations, and all good graces and virtues are ascribed to the Spirit of God, as the author and worker of them; and all wicked and vicious inclinations, all the sins and vices of men are attributed to the Devil, as in some sort the author

and

and worker of them : and because faith is the root of all other graces and virtues, as infidelity is of sin and wickedness, therefore faith is in a peculiar manner said to be the work of the Holy Ghost ; and infidelity the work of the Devil. And as the Spirit of God is said to *enlighten the understandings* of men, and to *open their hearts that they may believe* : so the Devil is said to *blind the minds of them that believe not*. As the Spirit of God is said to *work in them that believe* ; so the Devil is said to *work in the children of unbelief*. Eph. ii. 2. He is called *the Spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience*, ἀπειθείας, of unbelief. This is one of the principal designs which the Devil hath always carried on in the world, to bring men to unbelief, and to keep them in it. As it is the great work of the Spirit of truth to *lead men into truth*, and bring them to the belief of it : so the great business of the Devil is to seduce men from the truth. Upon this account he is said John viii. 44. to be a *Murderer from the beginning*, because he abode not in the truth ; which refers to the first temptation, whereby he ruined and destroyed our first parents, by seducing them to unbelief ; *Hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden ?* And because he found this attempt so successful, he still pursues mankind with the same temptation of unbelief. This for the *first* ; why infidelity is attributed to the Devil, as the cause of it.

I come in the *second* place, to shew more particularly what influence the Devil hath upon the minds of men, to keep them in unbelief ; how, and in what manner he *blinds the minds of them that believe not*. These *two* ways chiefly ; by false principles ; and by vicious and corrupt habits.

I. By false principles, which when they have once got possession of the understanding, like so many enemies they defend it, and hold out against the truth. By this means the Devil kept a great part of the *Jews*, and of the heathen world in unbelief ; and their minds were so blinded by these false principles which they had entertained, that they could not see *the light of the glorious gospel of Christ*. As for the *Jews*, he had, with a great deal of art, conveyed false principles into them, whereby they were extremely prejudiced against Christ and his doctrine, so that when he, who was *the desire of all nations*, and whom the *Jews* had looked for, with so longing an expectation, was come, they could see no beauty in him, wherefore he should be desired. The Devil no doubt understood very well by the prophecies of the Old Testament, that the *Messias* was to come, who would give a terrible blow to his kingdom ; and therefore to provide against this storm which he saw coming upon him, he possessed the *Jews* a great while before with false apprehensions of the *Messias*, that he was to be a great temporal prince, and to deliver *Israel* from all their enemies, and to subdue all nations to them ; and he play'd his game so well, that the most learned among the *Jews* were generally possessed with this apprehension, under the notion of a divine doctrine, which had been brought down to them by tradition from *Moses* and the prophets : So that when the *Messias* came, and they saw nothing of the outward glory and splendor which they expected, they would not know him, but despised and rejected him as a counterfeit and impostor.

As for the idolatrous Gentiles, he had, for many ages together, blinded them with false notions of God and his worship, and with principles of a false philosophy, by which when they came to measure the doctrine of *Christ*, the plain truths of the christian religion seemed foolish and ridiculous to them ; and by these prejudices the Devil kept many of them, especially of the Philosophers, from believing the gospel.

And proportionably in every age, suitably to the temper of it, he endeavours to possess men with false principles, either to keep them in unbelief, or to drive them to it.

II. The *second way* whereby the Devil *blinds the minds of them that believe not*, is by vicious and corrupt habits ; which tho' they do not possess the understanding, yet they have a bad influence upon it ; as fumes and vapours from the lower parts of the body affect the head. The vices and lusts of men darken the understanding, and fill the mind with gross and sensual apprehensions of things, and render men unfit to discern those truths that are of a spiritual nature and tendency, and indisposed to receive them. When mens *deeds are evil*, they do not love the light, lest it should reprove their vices, and make them manifest. Truth is offensive and grievous

ous to a corrupt mind, as the light of the sun is to sore eyes. A vicious man is not free to entertain those truths which would check and cross him in his way; he looks upon them as enemies, and therefore thinks himself concerned to oppose them. Every lust makes a man partial in his judgment, and lays a false bias upon his understanding, which carries it off from truth, and makes it lean towards that side of the question which is most agreeable to the interest of his lusts.

And by this means the Devil kept many, both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, in unbelief: he had tempted them to those sins which did indispose them for the receiving of that doctrine which enjoins *the denying of ungodliness, and worldly lusts*, and chargeth men so strictly with all manner of holiness and purity. The Pharisees under a mask of religion were guilty of great wickedness and impiety; and the Heathens were monstrously degenerated into all manner of vice. So that it was not only the false principles, but likewise the vicious lives of men, which were opposite to the doctrine of the gospel, *and blinded their minds, that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ did not shine unto them.*

And the Devil still makes use of this means to bring men to infidelity, and keep them in it; as knowing that the shortest way to atheism and infidelity, is to debauch them in their lives. Therefore the apostle seems to give this as the reason of the infidelity of some in his time, *2 Thess. ii. 12. That they all may be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* When men once take pleasure in wickedness, then infidelity becomes their interest; for they cannot otherwise defend and excuse a wicked life, but in denying the truth which opposeth it. That man only stands fair for the entertaining of truth, who is under the power of no lust, because he hath nothing to seduce him, and draw him aside in his enquiry after truth; he hath no interest but to find truth: he hath the indifference of a traveller, who is not inclined to one way more than another, but is only concerned to know the right way. Such indifference of mind every good man hath; he is ready to receive truth, when sufficient evidence is offered to him, because he is not concerned that the contrary proposition should be true: if a man be addicted to any lust, he is not likely to judge impartially of things; and therefore our Saviour doth with great reason require this disposition to qualify a man for the discerning of truth, *John vii. 17. If any man will do God's will, he shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* He that is desirous to do the will of God, he is likely to judge indifferently concerning any doctrine that pretends to be from God; for if there be not good evidence for it, he hath no reason to deceive himself, by entertaining that as from God, which he hath no assurance that it is so; and if there be good evidence for it, he hath no interest to reject it: but if a man be enslaved to any vice or lust, he is not free to judge of those matters which touch upon his interest; but is under a great temptation to infidelity, because he must needs be unwilling to acknowledge the truth of that doctrine which lies so cross to his interest.

Thirdly, This does not excuse the infidelity of men, that the Devil is in some sort the cause of it; because he cannot blind our minds, unless we consent to it: He can only suggest false principles to us, but we may chuse whether we will entertain them; he can only tempt us to be wicked, he cannot force us to be so whether we will or not: as we may resist the dictates, and quench the blessed motions and suggestions of God's Spirit, and too often do: So may we *resist the Devil*, and repel or *quench* those *fiery darts* which he casts into our minds, tho' we do not do it so often as we should. We cannot resist the motions of God's Spirit without injury to ourselves: but we may safely oppose the suggestions of the Devil; and we may do it with success, if we sincerely endeavour it. So God hath promised, that *if we resist the Devil, he shall flee from us*: But if we voluntarily consent to his temptations, and suffer ourselves to be blinded by him, the fault is our own, as well as his, and we are guilty of that infidelity which we suffer him to tempt us into. And this will appear, if we consider,

Fourthly, The wickedness and unreasonableness of infidelity. The scripture every where gives it a bad character, calling it, *an evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the living God.* Not to believe those revelations of God, which are sufficiently

propounded

propounded to us, is *an apostasy from the living God*, a kind of atheism, and an argument of a very evil temper and disposition. And therefore St. John speaks of infidelity, as the highest affront to God imaginable, and as it were a giving God the lye, 1 John, v. 10. *He that believeth not the record which God hath given of his Son, is said to make God a liar.*

The greatest and clearest testimonies that ever God gave to any person in the world, were to *Jesus Christ*, and yet how full of infidelity were the *Jews*, to whom these testimonies were given? They are the great patterns of infidelity, who resisted such immediate evidence; and by the characters which the New Testament gives us of them, we may judge of the evil and unreasonableness of infidelity: And if we consult the history of the New Testament, we shall find infidelity described by such characters and properties, and accompanied with such qualities, as shew it to be a very evil and unreasonable spirit. The principal of them are these,

1. Monstrous partiality in denying that which had greater evidence than other matters which they did believe.

2. Unreasonable and groundless prejudice.

3. A childish kind of perverseness.

4. Obstinacy and pertinacious persisting in error.

5. Want of patience to consider and examine what can be said for the truth.

6. Rudeness, and boisterous falling into uncivil terms.

7. Fury, and outrageous passion.

8. Infidelity is usually attended with bloody and inhuman persecution. But the treating on these particulars I reserve for another subject*.

* See the following Sermons on John iii. 19. Ser. 3.

The *third* and *last* thing contained in the text, is the dangerous state of those who having the gospel propounded to them, yet do not entertain and believe it; the apostle tells us they are in a lost and perishing condition; *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.*

I say of those who have the gospel propounded to them. As for those to whom the gospel was never offered, they shall not be condemned for their unbelief of it: God will not punish them for not believing the revelation which was never propounded to them, but for sinning against *the law written in their hearts*. So the apostle hath stated this matter, Rom. ii. 12, 14, 15, they that have a law revealed to them by God, shall be judged by that law; but they that are without such a law, shall be judged without the law, by the law which is written in their hearts. Those persons and nations in the world, to whom the gospel was not revealed, shall not be condemned for not believing it; but for sins committed by them against the light of nature, and the law which is written in every man's breast.

But those who have the gospel propounded to them, and yet continue in unbelief, their case is the most dangerous of any persons in the world, whether they be speculative or practical infidels.

1. For speculative infidels (of whom I have been principally speaking) we may guess how great their condemnation shall be, by the greatness of their sin, which I have endeavoured fully to describe to you, with all its aggravations. It is called, Heb. iii. 12. *An evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the living God*, ἐν τῇ ἀποστασίᾳ ἀπὸ τοῦ ζῶντος Θεοῦ. Infidelity is a kind of *apostasy from God*; 'tis said to be the giving of God the lye, 1 John, v. 10. *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar*; and we cannot but think that God will severely punish those who put such affronts upon him: it is but equal, that they who resist the clearest light, should have their portion in utter darkness.

2. For the practical infidels, those who in words acknowledge the gospel to be true, but in works deny it; their condition is every whit as bad as the others; nay, I had almost said; that it shall be more tolerable at the day of judgment for the speculative infidel than for them. He who denies the truth of the christian religion, and lives contrary to the precepts of it, he acts suitably to his principles; but he that owns the truth of the gospel, and lives a wicked life, offers violence to those principles which he hath entertained.

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For if we profess ourselves christians. by this profession we declare to the world, that we believe that the Son of God hath delivered that doctrine to the world, which we call *the gospel*, and hath promised to be *the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him*, and hath threatened men with eternal misery in case of disobedience; and that we make not the least doubt, but that both in his promises and threatnings God will be as good as his word: But if in the midst of this profession, we live contrary to the holy precepts of the gospel, in *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, in profane swearing, by a trifling and irreverent use of the great and glorious name of God, in the neglect of God, and of the duties of religion, in the profanation of his day, in drunkenness and filthy lusts, in fraud and oppression, in lying and perjury, in wrath and malice, in enmity and uncharitableness one toward another; this very thing, that we have made profession of the gospel, will be an aggravation of our condemnation. Do we think, that at the day of judgment, we shall escape by pleading this for ourselves, that we believed the gospel, and made profession of it? No! *out of our own mouths we shall be condemned*; for it seems *we knew our Master's will, and yet did it not*; we were convinced that we ought not to do such things, and yet we did them; we believed the glorious promises of the gospel, and yet we neglected this great salvation, as a thing not worthy the looking after; we were verily persuaded of the intolerable and endless torments of hell, and yet we would leap into those flames.

Nothing can make more against us, than such an apology as this; our very excuse will be the highest accusation and charge that can be brought against us, and out of our own confession we shall be condemned.

All that now remains, is to make some application of this discourse which I have made to you concerning the truth of the Christian Religion; which I should do in these *two* particulars,

First, To persuade us to a firm belief of the Christian Religion. And,

Secondly, To live according to it. But as to this, I have prevented myself in some

* See Sermon. former discourses*.

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S E R M O N CLXXXIX.

The Excellency and Universality of the Christian Revelation, with the Sin and Danger of rejecting it.

J O H N iii. 19

The First
Sermon on
this text.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

AT the 16th verse of this chapter our Saviour declares to *Nicodemus* (who was already convinced by his miracles, that he was a *teacher come from God*) the great love and goodness of God to mankind in sending him into the world, to be the Saviour of it; *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life*. Considering the great wickedness of mankind, it might justly have been feared and expected, that God should have sent his Son into the world upon a different errand, to have punished the wickedness of men, and to have destroyed them from off the face of the earth; but he tells us at the 17th verse, that *God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that thro' him the world might be saved*;

ved; and that the only way to avoid this condemnation, and to obtain that salvation which God designed for us, is *to believe on him whom God hath sent*, ver. 18. *He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* He is condemned by this very act of rejecting the Son of God, because he rejects the only way whereby salvation is to be had; and to aggravate the condemnation of such persons, our Saviour here in the text represents himself and his doctrine as *a light come into the world*, on purpose to discover to us our sinful and miserable condition, and the way of our recovery out of it, and salvation from it; and those that believe not on him, who do not entertain and welcome this clear and gracious discovery of God's love and goodness to mankind, as doing the absurdest thing imaginable, and making the most preposterous choice, preferring *darkness* before *light*: *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

In which words there are these *six* things observable,

First, The description which is here given of our Saviour and his doctrine, they are called *a light*. *Light is come*, that is, the Son of God preaching the doctrine of life and salvation to men.

Secondly, the universal influence of this light, *Light is come into the world*. It is designed for illumination and instruction, not only of a particular place and nation but of a whole world.

Thirdly, The excellency and advantages of this doctrine above any other doctrine or institution, even that of the *Jewish* religion, which was likewise immediately from God; they are all but *darkness* in comparison of it, *Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.*

Fourthly, The absurdity and unreasonableness of rejecting the doctrine of the gospel; it is a preferring *darkness* before *light*: *men loved darkness rather than light*; that is, they chuse rather to continue in their former ignorance, than to entertain this clear and most perfect discovery of God's will to mankind.

Fifthly, The true reason and account of this absurd choice: *Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

Sixthly, The great guilt of those who reject the doctrine of the gospel; by this very act of theirs *they are condemned*, nay they condemn themselves, because they reject the only means of their salvation: *This is the condemnation*, this very thing condemns them, and argues the height of their folly and guilt, that when light is come into the world, they preferred darkness before it. I shall discourse distinctly these particulars.

First, We will consider the description which is here given of our Saviour and his doctrine, they are called *light*; *Light is come into the world*. Light is a metaphor frequently used in scripture for knowledge, especially for spiritual and divine knowledge; and those who teach and instruct others are said to be *lights*. So our Saviour is frequently called *the light of the world*, and *the true light*; and his disciples, who were to instruct the world, are called *light*, *ye are the light of the world*; and the doctrine of our Saviour is likewise called *a light*, *the light of the glorious gospel of Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. And it is with respect to his doctrine, that he is here said in the text to be *a light come into the world*: which phrase of *coming into the world*, does not so immediately refer to his nativity, as to his commission from God; for this phrase of *coming into the world*, is of the same importance with that of *being sent from God*; as *verse 17*. where he says of himself, that *God sent him not into the world, to condemn the world*; and here in the text, *this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world*, that is, that when God sent his son on purpose to preach such a doctrine, men should reject it and set it at nought: and in this sense, this phrase of *coming into the world*, is I think frequently used in the new testament, for *coming in God's name, upon some message to the world*. So *chap. vi. 14*. some of the *Jews* being convinced of our Saviour's divine commission, express it thus; *of a truth this is that prophet which was to come into the world*. So *chap. xii. 46*. speaking of himself as sent of God, says he, *I am come a light into the world*; he had said just before, *he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me*; and then he adds, *I am a light come into the world*. There

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is one text indeed, where this phrase seems to be taken for being born into the world, chap. i. 9. *And that was the true light, which enlightens every man that cometh into the world*: but several of the fathers, as St. Cyril and St. Augustin, read this text otherwise, and that with great probability, considering the use of this phrase every where else; I say, they read it thus: *this was the true light which coming into the world, enlighteneth every man*; that is, which was sent from God to enlighten all mankind: and so this phrase of *coming into the world*, refers not to men's being born into the world, but to our Saviour's being sent from God; and this our Saviour seems to distinguish from his birth, *John xviii. 37. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth*, meaning that he was not only born, but commissioned by God for this end.

But enough for the explication of this phrase, the proper importance whereof is not unworthy our knowledge; especially since a sect amongst us build their doctrine of a light within them, and born with them, sufficient to conduct every man to salvation, upon that text I mentioned before, *this was the true light, which enlightens every man that cometh into the world*; for which there is no pretence, if we read it as the original will very well bear it, *this was the true light, which coming into the world, enlighteneth every man*. And so our Saviour says of himself, chap. xii. 46. *I who am the light, am come into the world*.

But that which I principally intended under this head, is the unfolding of the metaphor, which runs through the text, that so we may come at the plain sense and meaning of it, namely, why our Saviour, or (which is all one) the doctrine which he preached to the world, is represented to us by *light*. And here I might tell you that the doctrine of the gospel is called a *light*, with regard to its cheering and reviving nature; for *light* (says Solomon) *is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to the eye to behold the sun*: so the gospel is *glad tidings of great joy*. In regard likewise of its purity; as light is the purest of all corporeal beings, so the doctrine of the gospel doth enjoin a greater holiness and purity, than any other religion ever did. And (not to be tedious in flight things) in regard of its sudden communication and speedy propagation in the world. As *light* darts itself from east to west in a moment; so the gospel was propagated with incredible swiftness, and did in a very short space diffuse itself over the world. Thus I might tell you, that in these and many more such pretty respects, the doctrine of the gospel is called a *light*: but I do not love to hunt down a metaphor; for I know very well, that the scripture (like other authors) useth a metaphor only to one purpose at one time; and though many more similitudes may by fancy be found out, it is certain, but one is intended; which I take notice of on purpose to reprove the vanity and injudiciousness of chasing metaphors farther than ever they were intended: for a metaphor is commonly used to represent to our mind the first and most obvious likenesses of things. Thus the doctrine of the gospel is called *light*, in respect of the clearness of its discovery, it being one of the chief and most obvious properties of light, to discover and make visible itself, and other things. So the apostle tells us, Ephes. v. 13. *But all things that are reprov'd, are made manifest by the light*: and in this respect and no other, the doctrine of the gospel is here called a *light*; because it clearly discovers to the world those things which they were either wholly ignorant or uncertain of before; and withal it carries its own evidence along with it, and hath plain characters of its own divinity upon it.

And here I might shew at large these *two* things.

First, What discoveries the doctrine of the gospel hath made to the world.

Secondly, What evidence it brings along with it, of its own divinity, that it is from God.

First, What discoveries the doctrine of the gospel hath made to the world. It hath more clearly discovered,

1. The nature of God, which is the great foundation of religion.
2. Our own sinful and miserable state.
3. The way and means of our remedy and recovery out of it.
4. A more perfect and certain law and rule of life.
5. A more powerful assistance, for the aid and encouragement of our obedience.
6. And

6. And lastly, The gospel hath more clearly discover'd to us the eternal rewards and punishments of another world, which are the great arguments to obedience and a holy life. I shall go over these as briefly as I can, having elsewhere * treated more largely on some of them. * See his Grace's Sermons published by himself, Vol. I. Serm. 5.

1. In the doctrine of the gospel we have a clear discovery made to us of the nature of God; which is the great foundation of all religion. For such as men's notions and conceptions of God are, such will their religious worship and services of him be; either worthy of him, and becoming his great and glorious Majesty; or vain and superstitious, answerable to the idol of their own imagination: and such will be the actions of their lives; for all men make their God their example, and esteem it an essential piece of religion, to endeavour to be like him. Now the gospel gives us the most true and perfect character of the divine nature, most agreeable to reason, and the wisest and best apprehensions of mankind, such a character as is apt to beget in us the highest love and reverence towards him, and to engage us to the imitation of him, by the constant practice of holiness and virtue; representing him to us as most amiable for his goodness, and most dreadful for his power and justice, describing him to be a pure Spirit, which the Heathen did not generally believe; and consequently to be worshipped in such a manner, as is most suitable to his spiritual nature, concerning which the *Jews* were infinitely mistaken: for God did not command sacrifices to the *Jews*, and all those external and troublesome observances, because they were most agreeable to his own nature; but because of the grossness of their apprehensions, and the carnality and hardness of their hearts. God did not prescribe this way of worship to them, because it was best; but because the temper of that people, which was so very prone to idolatry, would admit of no other.

The gospel likewise discovers to us more clearly the goodness of God, and his great love to mankind, one of the best and strongest motives in the world to the love of God. The heathen did generally dread God, and look upon him as fierce and revengeful, and therefore they studied by all means to appease him, even by human sacrifices, and offering up their own children to him; and all along in the Old Testament, though there be plain and express declarations of the goodness of God, yet he is generally described as very terrible and severe; but the gospel is full of gracious declarations of God's love and mercy to mankind. In the Old Testament he is usually stiled *the Lord of Hosts, the great and terrible God*; but in the New Testament, he represents himself in a milder stile, *the God of love and peace, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him the Father of mercies, and the God of all patience and consolation*. And this difference between the stile of the Old and New Testament was so remarkable, that one of the greatest sects in the primitive church (I mean that of the *Gnosticks*, which was subdivided into many other sects) did upon this found their heresy of two principles or Gods; the one evil and fierce and cruel, whom they called the God of the Old Testament; the other kind and loving and merciful, whom they called the God of the New.

2. The gospel hath likewise more clearly discovered to us our own sinful and wretched state; that being made upright, and originally designed by God to live in an holy and happy condition, and endued with sufficient power for that purpose, we by our wilful transgression and disobedience of an easy law given to our first parents, are sunk into a wretched state of ignorance and weakness, of sin and sorrow, and thereby are become estranged from God, and obnoxious to his wrath and displeasure, and utterly unable to help and recover ourselves out of this sad and miserable state. And this is a great advantage to us, to understand the truth of our condition, and the worst of our case; because a just sense of it will prompt us to seek out for a remedy, and make us ready to embrace it when it is offered to us. And therefore in the

3. Place, The gospel hath plainly discovered to us the way and means of our recovery out of this wretched condition: namely, that in tender commiseration of our miserable and helpless condition, God was pleased to send *his Son, his only Son*, into the world, to assume our nature, and *to be made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted*, to dwell among us, to converse with us, that he might instruct us in the way to happiness, and lead us therein by the example of his holy life; and that by his death he might be a propitiation for our sins, and purchase the

the forgiveness of them, and obtain eternal redemption for us. So that here is an adequate and perfect remedy discovered in the gospel, every way answerable to the weakness and impotency, the degeneracy and guilt of mankind; *God having laid help upon one that is mighty, and able to save to the utmost all those that come to God by him.* He took our nature upon him, and became man, *that he might bring us to God*, and by restoring us to his image and likeness, might repair those woful ruins which sin had made in us; and to obtain the pardon and forgiveness of our sins, *God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him to death for us all; and having raised him from the dead, hath sent him to bless us, in turning us away every one from our iniquity.* So that by this means, the great doubts and fears of mankind, concerning the way of appeasing the offended justice of God, are removed and satisfied. The gospel having given us full assurance, not only that God is reconciled to us, and willing, after all our offences and provocations, to become our friend; but that he hath established the way and means of it; so that *if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world.* And this is a peculiar advantage of the Christian religion, to assure us of the forgiveness of sins, of the manner how it is procured, and the certain terms upon which it is granted, which neither by the light of nature, nor by any revelation from God, was clearly discovered before.

4. The gospel hath likewise revealed to us, a more certain and perfect law and rule of life. It hath fix'd our duty, and made it more plain and certain in all the instances of it, than either the light of nature, or the utmost improvement of that light by philosophy, or than the *Jewish* religion had done before. It hath cleared our duty in some instances, which the light of nature had left doubtful, or which the subtle disputes of men had made so. It hath heighten'd our duty in several instances; and those things which had not the clear force of law before, but were only the counsels of wiser men, it hath turned into strict precepts, and made them necessary parts of our duty. It commands universal love and kindness, and good will among men, and perfect forgiveness of the greatest injuries and offences: and inculcates these precepts more vehemently, and forbids all malice and revenge more strictly and peremptorily, than any religion or philosophy had done before; as will fully appear to any one who will but attentively read and consider our Saviour's sermon upon the mount.

I cannot now enlarge in giving a particular account of the excellent laws and precepts of our religion, relating to God, our neighbour, and our selves; I shall only say of them, that they all tend to the perfection of our nature, and the raising of it to the highest pitch of virtue and goodness that we are capable of in this life, and to qualify and dispose us for the felicity of the next; that they every way conduce to the benefit and advantage of particular persons, singly considered, and to the peace and welfare of human society; in a word, they all conspire in the glory of God, and the comfort and happiness of man: and no religion that ever was in the world, nor no philosophy, can shew such a system of moral precepts, in which, as there is nothing vain and faulty, so neither is there any thing defective and wanting; so that St. *James* doth with great reason call it *a perfect law*.

5. The gospel doth also discover and offer to us a most powerful assistance for the aid and encouragement of our obedience, abundant help and strength to enable us to the performance of all which God requires of us. It offers us wisdom to enlighten our dark minds, and to direct us in doubtful and difficult cases. *James i. 5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* Our Saviour hath promised to give his holy Spirit to them that ask it, to help our weakness, and to raise our courage to strengthen us against the power and force of strong and violent temptations, and to assist us in all our conflicts with our spiritual enemies, and to comfort and support us in all our afflictions and sufferings.

And without this, all the other advantages which our religion affords us would signify little. For what would the knowledge of our sinful and miserable state avail us, without power to rescue ourselves out of it? What is the pardon of our sins past, without strength against them for the future? What would signify the most complete rule of life, and the most perfect pattern of holiness and virtue, without ability in some measure to observe it and live up to it? Without this necessary

cessary aid and support, we might despair of resisting the temptations, and mastering the difficulties of a christian course, of subduing the power of bad inclinations, and breaking the force of vicious habits, and bearing up against the violence of extreme suffering and persecution for righteousness-sake; without this gracious assistance we can do nothing of all this; and by the help of this we may become, as St. Paul expresses it, *more than conquerors*.

6. And lastly, The gospel hath clearly discovered to us, the eternal rewards and punishments of another world, which are the great incentives and arguments to obedience, and a patient and constant continuance in well-doing. The gospel (as the apostle to the *Hebrews* tells us) is in this respect *a better covenant* than the Law, *being established upon better promises*, and having the sanction of more severe and terrible threatenings. These great and powerful arguments to keep mankind within the bounds of their duty, which the wisest of the heathen had some doubt of, and which were but very imperfectly revealed to the *Jews*, are clearly made manifest by the gospel. So the apostle tells us, that *life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel*; and that *therein the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. And this gives the gospel a mighty power and influence over the minds of men. Now God commands all men every where to repent, and obey his laws; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is a sensible demonstration to all mankind of another life after this, and consequently of a future judgment.

I might proceed to shew, in the *Second* place, That as the gospel is a *light*; in respect of its clear discovery of other things to us, so likewise of itself, and its own divine authority.

It is a holy and reasonable doctrine, suitable to the highest and best improved reason of mankind, and plainly tending to our perfection and happiness; both for the sublimity of its mysteries, and the simplicity and excellency of its precepts, every way worthy to have God for its author, and most likely to proceed from him, and from none else. In a word, it is a doctrine in all respects so excellent and perfect, that it is beyond the compass of human understanding to imagine any thing better; and impossible, that any religion, materially differing from this, should be so good. No religion that ever was, or which the wit of man can devise, can give us juster notions of God, a truer account of ourselves, better rules of a good life, and arguments more powerful to persuade us to goodness, than the christian religion hath done. And the intrinsic goodness and excellency of any religion, goes half way in the proof of its divinity; to which, if God be pleased to add the external confirmation of plain and unquestionable miracles, it amounts to a full demonstration, and hath all the evidence that it is possible for any religion to have, that it is from God.

But this is a very large argument, which I have handled in some other discourses*. All therefore that I shall at present add, is an inference or two from what I have been discoursing upon this argument, suited to the solemnity of this season†.

I. We should welcome this light which is come into the world with all possible expressions of joy and thankfulness. The doctrine of the gospel is the most glorious light that ever shone upon the world, the best news that ever arrived to mankind. Light is a chearful thing; *The light of the eyes* (says Solomon) *rejoiceth the heart, and good news maketh the bones fat*. When the angels brought the news of our Saviour's birth to the shepherds, with what joy does he relate it to them? Luke ii. 10, 11. *Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*. And Matth. ii. 10. when the wise men saw the star, which pointed at the place of his birth, and conducted them to it, 'tis said, *they rejoiced with great joy*.

And whenever we commemorate the breaking in of this glorious light upon the world, I mean the birth of our blessed Saviour, how should our hearts be filled with joy, and our mouths with praises! We should every one of us break out into that hymn of the blessed mother of our Lord, *My soul doth magnify the Lord*,

and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, for he hath regarded me and all mankind in our low estate. He was pleased to come down from heaven to save us from hell; and to become man, that he might bring us to God; and was contented to be miserable, that he might make us happy; and he did declare this mighty affection to us, when we were not only unworthy of his love, but even beneath the consideration and regard of his pity; for what is man, that God should be thus mindful of him, or the Son of Man, that the Son of God should visit him? that he should condescend to inhabit our nature, and to dwell among us? All mankind may with equal or greater reason say, as the centurion once did to him, *Lord, we are not worthy that thou shouldest come under our roof.* What means this amazing condescension, that thou shouldest leave thy glory, to be thus obscured, and come from God, to be despised and rejected of men; and quit the regions of bliss and happiness, to become a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief! Was it for us that thou didst all this? Yea, for our sakes, who never had done any thing for thine, who may be ashamed to remember, that we were grievous sinners, and bitter enemies to thee, when all this was done for us.

Thus we should celebrate the memory of this blessed season, and as often as the year returns, with great joy and thankfulness commemorate the great blessings which this day brought to the world, and say with David, *This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will be glad and rejoice therein.* Abraham and David saw this day, but far off; and yet they rejoiced: how should we then be transported with joy, to whom this day is come, and upon whom the Sun of righteousness is long since risen, with healing and salvation under his wings!

II. Let us walk in this light. This expression the scripture useth to signify what use we should make of the advantages and opportunities which by the glorious light of the gospel are afforded to us, John xii. 35. *Walk while ye have the light; lest darkness come upon you.* Ephes. v. 8. *For ye were sometimes darkness: but now are ye light in the Lord: walk therefore as children of the light,* Rom. xiii. 11, 12, 13, 14. *It is now high time to awake out of sleep: For now is our salvation nearer, than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

This counsel is proper for christians at all times, who live under the light of the gospel; but more especially at this time, when we commemorate the coming of this light into the world. Nothing can be more unsuitable and contrary to it, than works of darkness, I mean sin and wickedness, and those abominable vices, which too many are apt to indulge themselves in at this time, more especially such as the apostle names in the text just now mentioned, *rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, contention and quarrelling.* We should at this time more especially put off those vices, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, be clothed with all those graces and virtues, which in the precepts of his religion, and the example of his life, he hath recommended to us. This is the time when the word was made flesh, and put on our nature; and what return can be more proper for us at this season, than to put on the Lord Jesus; and to make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof?

Nay at this time we should retrench more than usual from our excess and superfluity, both because of the crying necessities of the poor, who are very numerous, and likewise for the relief of our distressed and persecuted brethren, who are fled to us for shelter from the barbarous rage of their persecutors. What we would have done for the honour of Christ at another time, let us now do for the relief of his members; and whatever kindness we shew to them, he will take it as done to himself. We have great cause to be chearful at this time, and we may testify our joy by feasting, or any other lawful expressions of it: but we must not so feast, as to forget the affliction of Joseph, and not to remember that we also are in the body, and liable to the same sufferings. We must therefore take heed, that our table do not become a snare to us; and that our mirth do not degenerate into sensuality and sin.

Every christian hath so many arguments against sin, that we should abstain from it at all times : but of all other times we should be most ashamed to be guilty of any lewdness and wickedness, when we are remembring *the appearance of the Son of God, to bring salvation to us, and to teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.*

To conclude, let us by all that hath been said be persuaded so to celebrate the memory of Christ's first coming, to *take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, that we may with comfort and joy wait for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, when he shall appear a second time, without sin unto salvation.

S E R M O N C X C.

The Excellency and Universality of the Christian Revelation, with the Sin and Danger of rejecting it.

J O H N iii. 19.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

*The second
Sermon on
this Text.*

I N discoursing on these words, I have already considered the *first* thing observable in them, viz. The description which is here given of our Saviour and his doctrine; they are called *a light*. *Light is come*, that is, the Son of God, bringing the doctrine and knowledge of salvation to the world; it being one of the first and most obvious prophecies of *light* to discover and make visible itself and other things. *That which makes all things manifest, is light*; and accordingly I have observed, that the christian religion hath made a clear discovery to us of many great and important things, of which the world was either ignorant or doubtful before: and likewise that it brought great evidence along with it of its own divinity, and that it was from God.

I proceed now to the *second* thing observable in the text, viz. The universal influence of this light. *Light is come into the world*. The doctrine of the gospel was designed for the illumination and instruction, not of one particular place and nation; but of the whole world. Thus our Saviour and his doctrine are described by old Simeon, Luke ii. 30, 31, 32. *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.* To the Gentiles, who were before in darkness, he is said to be a *light*: but to the Jews, who had the light of divine revelation in some degree before, he is said to be a *glory*; that is, a brighter and more glorious light; *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.* And John i. 9. he is called *the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, that is, which was sent into the world for the illumination of all mankind. And John viii. 12. he says of himself, *I am the light of the world*.

Now that the revelation of the gospel by Jesus Christ was designed for the whole world, for the instruction, and comfort, and benefit of all mankind, I shall endeavour to make out by these *three* steps.

I. In that it is very credible, that God would some time or other make such a revelation of his will, as might be sufficient to direct and bring mankind to happiness,

II. That

II. That before the revelation of the gospel by *Jesus Christ*, no such general and universal declaration of God's will had been made to the world.

III. That the revelation of the gospel hath all the marks and characters of an universal revelation, and was certainly by God designed for that purpose.

I. It is very credible, that God would some time or other, when his infinite wisdom and goodness should think it most fit and seasonable, make such a revelation of his will to the world, as might be sufficient to direct and bring mankind to happiness. The consideration of the divine goodness is very apt to induce such a persuasion; for what more reasonable to believe concerning God, than that he who is *good to all*, and the common Father of all mankind, not *the God of the Jews* only, but *the God of the Gentiles* also (as *St. Paul* argues to this purpose, in his epistle to the *Romans*) should some time or other, in pity and compassion of the ignorant and degenerate and helpless condition of mankind, provide some universal remedy, by such a general revelation of his will, as was every way fitted and calculated to be of universal use and benefit to direct all men in the way to happiness, and if they be not wanting to themselves to bring them to it; that in the doubtings and uncertainties of mankind concerning the will of God, and the rule of their duty, he should give an universal law, equally obliging all men, to be a perfect and standing rule and measure of their duty in all times and places, and which should never stand in need of any addition, amendment, or alteration.

For why should we think that God, who is so equally related to us all, should confine the effects of his goodness to a few persons, or a small part of mankind, to one particular family or nation? That he whose bounty is so equal and unconfined, in the disposing of temporal blessings, should be so partial and narrow in the bestowing of his greatest and best gifts, those spiritual blessings which concern our souls, and our happiness to all eternity? How can we in reason imagine, that he who *causeth the sun to rise, and his rain to fall* upon the whole world, should vouchsafe that great and most glorious light of his divine and heavenly truth only to a few, and shower down his spiritual blessings upon a small part of the earth, leaving all the rest of the world a wilderness, and a land of darkness? Thus to think of God, is no ways agreeable to those large apprehensions which mankind have always had of the goodness of God, by no means honourable to the divine nature; and therefore it is most highly probable, that God should one time or other make such a revelation of his will to mankind, as is of universal concernment and advantage.

II. I shall shew that before the revelation of the gospel by *Jesus Christ*, no such general and universal declaration of God's will had been made to the world. All the revelations which God had made to men before, were either made to some particular persons upon particular occasions; or to one particular nation and people, I mean that of the *Jews*. Those which were made to particular persons were so narrow and limited, and of so private concernment, that they signified nothing to the generality of mankind; nor could the knowledge of them, with any degree of evidence, have been propagated. As for that revelation which was made to the *Jews*, it was both in its nature and design, and in all the circumstances of it, plainly limited to one particular place and nation. And as God discovered no intention, so neither were there any proper means and endeavours used to proclaim and propagate it, as an universal law and institution obligatory to all mankind.

From the nature and all the circumstances of the *Jewish* law, it clearly appears to have been designed for a municipal law and constitution, for the governing of one particular people and nation, within a certain territory and spot of ground, to which a great part of the precepts of it are peculiarly limited, and could be exercised and practised no where else; and not intended to take in and oblige all the nations of the earth. For when this law was first given, God plainly directs it to the people of *Israel*, beginning it in this form of words, *Hear, O Israel, The Lord thy God is one God*; and *I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage*; and he frequently tells them, *that he had separated them from all the people upon the face of the earth, to be a peculiar people to himself*; to be governed by peculiar civil laws,

laws, and by a particular way of religious worship; for which reason the apostle calls the *Jewish* law and religion, *A wall of partition*, which did separate and divide them from all other people; so that even towards the strangers that lived among them, they were not bound in several cases to observe the same laws towards them which they were obliged strictly to observe towards their brethren; as in the case of usury, and remitting debts, and releasing of servants.

Besides that, a great part of their religion was confined to a particular place, which God should appoint, and which at last by his appointment was fixed to the temple at *Jerusalem*, to which they were obliged to resort thrice every year; which it was impossible for other nations to do. Not to mention that the great promises and threatnings of that law, were of plenty and prosperity, or of famine and affliction in that land. To all which we may add, that a great part of the laws and ordinances of that religion, were peculiarly fitted and suited to the genius and inclination of that people, and made in condescension to their capacities and prejudices, to the obstinacy and hardness of their hearts.

It is very clear likewise, that God did not design to spread and propagate this law any farther than the people; since no means were appointed by him, no endeavours were used to that end: no apostles and prophets were sent forth to proclaim and publish this law to other nations; nay, the providence of God seems rather purposely to have designed to conceal them and their law, till the time drew near of God's revealing to the world a more perfect institution, which should have its rise and beginning there, and from thence be published over the world, according to that of the prophet, that *the law should come out of Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*: but the law which was given by *Moses* to the *Jews*, was for many ages in a great measure concealed from the rest of the world. So the *Psalmist* tells us, *Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20. He sheweth his word unto Jacob; his statutes and judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them.* Nay, on the contrary, God had provided by several strict and severe laws, that the people of *Israel* should have as little commerce and conversation as was possible with other nations; a plain sign he never intended their religion to be propagated among them: but this is so manifest from the nature of the *Jewish* religion, and all the circumstances of its constitution, that I need not to labour any farther in the proof of it. I proceed therefore to shew, in the

III. and last place, That the revelation of the gospel hath all the marks and characters of an universal revelation, and was certainly designed by God for that end. And this will clearly appear, by considering these four things.

1. The person by whom God was pleased to make this revelation to the world.
2. The nature and design of it.
3. The prophecies and predictions concerning it. And,
4. The remarkable countenance and assistance which was given from heaven to the first publishers of it.

1. If we consider the person by whom God was pleased to make this revelation to the world, we cannot think that God had any less design therein, than the recovery and reformation of mankind. Now the person employ'd by God to make this revelation of his will, was the eternal and only begotten Son of God, assuming our nature and appearing in it; I say the eternal and only begotten Son of God. So the apostle to the *Hebrews* describes him, and thereby distinguisheth him from all the former prophets, by whom, in former ages, God had made particular revelations of himself to men, *Heb. i. 1, 2, 3. God who at sundry times (or by several parts and degrees) and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets; hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds: who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power.* What a character is here of the greatest and most glorious person, that ever was employ'd to men! a messenger of God to man; and who so fit as *the Son of God*, who came from *the bosom of his father*, to reveal his will to all mankind? Who so proper as he, who made the world, and upholds and preserves it, to be sent upon so great an errand, as the recovery and salvation of the whole world? And on the contrary, who so unfit, as this great and glorious

glorious person, to be employed in any less and lower design, than that which was of general concernment to the benefit and happiness of all mankind? So great an ambassador was not fit to be sent to treat of any thing less than an universal peace, and the reconciliation of the whole world.

And then if we consider him, as assuming human nature, and thereby equally related to all mankind, it was fit he should be concerned for that whole race of creatures to whom he had so nearly allied himself, and whose nature he had vouchsafed to assume. It became him, who became man, to shew himself a lover of mankind, to reveal the will of God, and the way to happiness, to all men, to be an universal teacher and lawgiver; that by the direction and doctrine, and the obedience of his laws, *All men might come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved.*

2. If we consider the nature of this revelation, it will appear to be designed for the general use and benefit of mankind. The matters revealed, whether concerning God or ourselves, this world or the other, are of universal concernment. The laws of this religion are not calculated for any particular place or nation, one more than another; and the arguments and encouragements to the obedience to these laws, are equally fitted to work upon all capacities and conditions, and apt to affect them alike, because they equally touch the interests and concernments of all men: for since all men are equal in the immortal duration of their souls, and equally obnoxious to the judgment of God in another world, it concerns all men alike to understand their duty, and the way to gain the favour of God, and thereby to escape the endless and intolerable miseries, and to obtain the unspeakable and everlasting happiness of another world: and to direct, and excite men hereto, the whole revelation of the gospel, and the doctrines, and all the laws of it, do plainly tend. There is nothing in the Christian religion, but what is fit for all men to know and practise, in order to their present peace and comfort, and their future and eternal happiness; and these things surely are of universal and equal concernment to mankind.

3. The predictions and prophecies concerning the *Messias*, and the doctrine which should be delivered to the world, do plainly shew, that this revelation should be universal. In the first promise to *Abraham*, it is plainly foretold, that *in his seed*, that is, as the *Jews* always understood it, in the *Messias*, *all the nations of the earth should be blessed.* And there are innumerable predictions in the prophets of the Old Testament to this purpose. I shall mention but a few of many, *Psal. ii. 8. Ask of me, (saith God to his Son) and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance; and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.* *Psal. lxxii. 17. speaking of the Messias, Men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed.* *Isa. xlix. 6. I will give thee (says God there concerning him) for a light to lighten the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth.*

4. And lastly, This revelation was actually published to the world, God giving remarkable countenance and assistance from heaven to the first preachers and publishers of it.

The apostles of our Lord and Saviour, in virtue of his commission, and by his express command just before his ascension, went forth and publish'd his doctrine to the world. - Having upon the day of *Pentecost*, according to his promise which he made to them before his death, and renewed to them after his resurrection, when he was going to his Father, I say, having according to his express promise, received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, they began to publish the gospel first to the *Jews*; and being rejected by the greatest part of them, they preached it to the *Gentiles*; and as a confirmation of the doctrine which they preached, they witnessed the resurrection of Christ from the dead, as the great evidence of the truth of his doctrine; and to give confirmation to this testimony, God enabled them to work miracles, and particularly to raise the dead to life, which was a confirmation of their testimony beyond all exception: and in order to the more speedy and effectual propagation of this doctrine, God was pleased to work a strange miracle never wrought upon any occasion before or since; he endowed the apostles and first preachers of Christianity with a power of speaking all languages, which they had occasion in their travels to make use of, without ever having studied or learned them; and this miraculous gift was common to all the apostles

apostles, and continued till the gospel was published by them in most parts of the then known world ; greater evidence than which God cannot be imagined to give of his design to communicate the knowledge of this doctrine universally, and to all nations : and if it was rejected in some places, and the progress of it obstructed in others, this doth not hinder but that God designed it to be universally known, and that it is of its own nature fit to be a law to all mankind ; and God, who in his secret council hath not thought fit as yet to grant the knowledge of this doctrine of salvation to some parts of the world, may in his due time send this *light* into those *dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of barbarousness and cruelty*, and grant the knowledge of salvation to them. In the mean time, what cause have we to bless God, to whom this light came so soon, and who have enjoy'd it so long : *Let us walk in the light, while we have it ; lest darkness overtake us.*

And thus much may suffice to have spoken of the *second* particular which I observed in the text, namely, the universal influence of this light ; *light is come into the world.*

I proceed to speak briefly to the *third* particular I mentioned, *viz.* the excellency and advantages of this doctrine of the Christian religion, above any other doctrine or institution, even that of the *Jewish* religion, which was likewise immediately from God. They are all but *darkness* in comparison of it. *Light is come into the world.* But in this I have in a great measure prevented myself, in what I have already discoursed upon the *two* former heads, and therefore I shall say the less upon it : for by what I have already said, it will in good measure appear, how obscure and imperfect the discoveries both of *natural* light, and of the *Jewish* religion were, in comparison of the clear and bright revelation of the gospel ; and *that* both concerning the nature of God, and the worship which is most suitable and acceptable to him ; and likewise concerning the rule of our duty, and the rewards and punishments of another life, which are the great motives and arguments to obedience ; and which, as to the greatest part of mankind, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, had but a very weak and faint influence before. And how could it well be otherwise, since the apprehensions of mankind concerning these things were dark and doubtful !

What gross and imperfect notions the *Heathens* had concerning God, we may judge by their universal and abominable idolatry. How uncertain their morality was (which yet was much the best part of *Heathenism*) we may see by their endless differences and disputes concerning moral duties. How wavering they were concerning the immortality of souls, and the rewards of another world, we may judge by the different and contrary opinions of the greatest philosophers about these points. So that *Heathenism* was plainly defective, both in the knowledge of God, which is the great foundation of all religion ; and the precepts of a good life, which are the rule of it ; and the assurance of immortality, which is the great motive to religion, and the only solid comfort and support of the mind of man under the evils and afflictions of life, and against the fears of death.

And the *Jewish* religion likewise, though it had manifold advantages of *Paganism*, yet was it very short and imperfect in many of these respects which I have mentioned : besides that it gave no clear and well-grounded assurance of the pardon and forgiveness of sins ; and the rewards of another world were very obscurely revealed under that dispensation. So that well might the apostle, upon comparison of the law and the gospel, say, *The law made nothing perfect : but the bringing in of a better hope did.*

And as for evidence which those religions had, *Paganism* pretended to no other authority for their idolatrous worship, but the long custom and practice of the world. This *Symmachus* the Heathen insists upon, instead of all other arguments, *Sequimur majores nostros, qui feliciter secuti sunt suos : We follow our forefathers, who happily followed theirs.*

The *Jewish* religion indeed produced good evidence that it was from God : but it is very destitute of arguments to prove, that it was either an universal, or perfect, or final revelation of God's will to mankind ; nay, it was expressly said in their law, that *God would raise up another prophet among them, to whom they were to hearken, and to be obedient in all things.* The *Messias* was plainly foretold, and

spoken of both in the law and the prophets, as one that was to be the author of a more perfect law and institution, which in due time was to be revealed to the whole world, *to be a light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as to be *the glory of the people of Israel*: and accordingly *in the fulness of time* he came, and by a greater confirmation of miracles, than the *Jewish* religion had, he put a period to that weak and imperfect institution: and to shew that the law of *Moses* was at an end, God hath now for above 1600 years *taken away their place and nation*, destroy'd their temple, and laid waste their country, and dispersed them over the world; so that they are not capable of observing a great part of their religion. By all which it appears, that whatever was in the world before, was but *darkness*, in comparison of the glorious light of the gospel; so that well might our evangelist say, *This light was the true light, which coming into the world, enlightens every man*: The true light by way of excellency and eminency; as our Saviour calls himself *the true bread which came down from heaven*; so the doctrine of the gospel is called *the true light*, in opposition to those *false or imperfect lights* which were in the world before. This doctrine of the Christian religion is a perfect, and therefore a final discovery of the will of God to man; because it can receive no amendment, therefore it shall never have any change or alteration.

I will conclude this particular with that inference which the apostle to the *Hebrews* makes, from the consideration of the perfection and unchangeableness of the gospel dispensation, which he calls *A kingdom which cannot be shaken*, Heb. xii. 28, 29. *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be removed, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.* The better and more perfect, and more unchangeable our religion is, the better we should be; the more stedfastly should we persist in the sincere profession and practice of it: and if we do not, the heavier will be our condemnation; *for our God is a consuming fire.* I proceed to the

Fourth particular observable in the text, viz. The great unreasonableness of rejecting this doctrine of the gospel. It is to make the absurdest judgment and choice that is possible; to prefer darkness before light. *Men loved darkness rather than light*; that is, they chose rather to continue in their former ignorance, than to entertain the most clear and perfect discovery of God's will to mankind. And what can be more absurd and unreasonable, when the difference is so palpable, and the choice so plain? That man is blind that cannot distinguish *light* from *darkness*; and he is very perverse and obstinate, who seeing the difference between them, will *chuse darkness rather than light*. Such was the unreasonableness of those who rejected the gospel when it was revealed to the world; since nothing is more clear to an impartial and considerate man, than that the Christian religion is the best and most perfect institution, of the greatest and most universal concernment to mankind, that ever was revealed to men; and our blessed Saviour, who was the author and founder of this religion, gave greater evidence that he came from God, than any other prophet or teacher that ever was; and the worship of God which this religion prescribes, is most agreeable to his nature, being a spiritual and a reasonable service, fit for men to give, and for God to accept. In a word, the precepts of the gospel are more excellent in themselves, and better calculated for the happiness and perfection of human nature; and the motives and arguments to persuade men to the obedience of these precepts, more powerful than those of any other religion that ever yet appeared in the world.

So that the difference between the Christian religion, and all others that have been received and profest in the world, is so plain and apparent, that nothing but passion, or prejudice, or interest, or some other faulty principle, can hinder any man from yielding his assent to Christianity. The comparison is almost equal to that betwixt *light* and *darkness*; and therefore our Saviour had great reason to speak so very severely of the infidelity of the *Jews*, who rejected such a doctrine, propounded to them with so much evidence and advantage. And because the *Jews* are the great scripture pattern of perverse infidelity and opposition to the truth, it will not be amiss to take our estimate and measure of the unreasonableness of this spirit and temper, from the properties and characters which we find of it in the *Jews*, most of which do still inseparably accompany the spirit of infidelity where-ever it is; that as face answers face in water, so does the infidelity of this

this present age resemble that of the *Jews* in our Saviour's time, in all those perverse and unreasonable qualities which did then attend them; and therefore I shall take notice of some of the chief of them, as I find them dispersed up and down in the history of the new testament.

But this, and what remains to be said upon this argument, I must reserve for another discourse.

S E R M O N CXCI.

The Excellency and Universality of the Christian Revelation, with the Sin and Danger of rejecting it.

J O H N iii. 19.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

*The Third
Sermon on
this text.*

W H E N I began to discourse on these words, I observed in them several particulars. As,

First, The description which is here given of our Saviour and his doctrine, by the metaphor of *light*. *Light is come.*

Secondly, The universal influence of this *light*. *Light is come into the world.*

Thirdly, The excellency and advantages of the doctrine of the gospel, above any other doctrine or institution, even that of the *Jewish* religion, which was likewise immediately from God. They are all but *darkness*, in comparison with this, *Light is come into the world; and men loved darkness.*

These *three* I have dispatch'd, and have enter'd upon the *fourth* particular observable in my text, *viz.*

The great unreasonableness of rejecting this doctrine of the gospel. It is to make the absurdest judgment and choice that is possible, to prefer *darkness* before *light*. *Men loved darkness rather than light.* The difference between the christian religion and all others is so very plain, that our Saviour had great reason to speak thus severely of the infidelity of the *Jews*. And because the *Jews* are the great Scripture pattern of perverse infidelity, I proposed the taking an estimate of the unreasonableness of this spirit and temper, from the characters which we find of it in that people, most of which do still inseparably attend the spirit of infidelity, wherever it is. I shall therefore take notice of some of the chief of those characters, as I find them dispers'd up and down in the history of the new testament, and they are these which follow.

I. Monstrous partiality, in denying and rejecting that revelation, which had not only as great, but greater evidence, than other things which they did believe, and were ready enough to entertain. They *believed Moses and the prophets*; and the great confirmation which was given to them, was by the miracles which God wrought by them. Those miracles they did not see themselves, but received them from the testimony of their forefathers, being brought down to them by a very credible and uncontroll'd revelation, which they had no reason to doubt of the truth of; but they themselves saw the miracles which our Saviour wrought, which were more and greater than the miracles of *Moses* and all the prophets, so that they were eye-witnesses of that divine power which accompanied our Saviour; and yet they rejected him

him and his doctrine: nay, so unequally did they deal with him, that after they had rejected him, notwithstanding all the evidence which he gave that he *came from God*, they greedily received and ran after false prophets who gave no such testimony. So our Saviour foretells concerning them, *John v. 43.* and so afterwards it came to pass, *I am come*, saith he, *in my Father's name*, that is, have given sufficient evidence that he sent me, and *ye received me not; if another shall come in his own name, him will ye receive.* In his own name, that is, without any miracles to prove that he comes from God.

And to shew their horrible partiality yet more, after they had refused the clearest testimony that God could give of him, they were contented to accept of the disagreeing testimony of two witnesses against him, and upon that uncertain evidence to put him to death.

And this hath been the temper of those that oppose the truth in all ages, and in all kind of matters. Thus the church of *Rome* will needs understand those words of our Saviour, *This is my body*, in the sense of transubstantiation, contrary to the plain intention of them, and in contradiction to the reason and senses of all mankind; and yet they will not understand the plain institution of the sacrament in both kinds. And thus the atheists, who will not believe that there is a God, which made the world, can yet swallow things ten times harder to be believed; as that either the world was eternal of itself, or the matter of it; and that the parts of this matter being in perpetual motion, did after infinite trials and attempts at last happen to settle in this order in which we now are; that is, that this admirable frame of the world, which hath all the characters upon it of deep wisdom and contrivance, was made merely by chance, and without direction and design of any intelligent author; so partial is infidelity, as to assent to the most absurd things, rather than believe the revelations of God, or to own those principles, which are naturally imprinted upon the minds of men, and have the general consent of mankind.

II. Another usual concomitant of infidelity is unreasonable and groundless prejudice. The *Jews* were strangely prejudiced against our Saviour, and that upon the weakest and slightest ground, as that his original was known amongst them. *John vii. 27.* *Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.* Surely they were very ready to take exceptions against him, that would urge this for an objection; for what if his original were known, might he not be from God for all that? *Moses* was a great prophet, and yet it was very well known from whence he was; and it was no where said in the old testament that his original should be unknown; nay on the contrary it was plainly declared, that he was to be of the tribe of *Judah*, of the lineage of *David*, and to come out of *Bethlehem*.

Another prejudice against him was the meanness of his parents, and of the manner of his education. *Matth. xiii. 54.* *Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him.* And so likewise, *John vii. 15.* *How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?* A strange kind of unreasonable prejudice! They could not believe him to be an extraordinary person, because his parents and relations, his birth and manner of breeding were so mean, because he had been brought up to a trade, and not bred up like one of their *Scribes* and *Rabbies*; as if God could not inspire a man with all those gifts, which men ordinarily acquire by study and pains; and as if it had not been reasonable to expect, that the *Messias*, who they believed was to be the greatest prophet that ever was, should be thus inspired. Now in all reason the argument is strong the other way, that sure he was an extraordinary prophet, who all on a sudden gave such evidence of his great knowledge and wisdom, and did such mighty works; because this could not be imputed to his breeding and education, since that was so mean, and therefore there must be something extraordinary and divine in it; thus another man, who had been free from prejudice, would have been apt to reason.

Another

Another unreasonable prejudice was grounded upon a spiteful and malicious proverb, concerning the country where our Saviour was brought up, namely *Galilee*, John i. 46. *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* And John vii. 41. *Shall Christ, that is the Messiah, come out of Galilee?* And ver. 52. *Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.* Nathanael indeed, who was a sincere good man, was easily wrought off from this prejudice, and was contented to be convinced of the contrary by plain evidence, when Philip desired him *to come and see*, John i. 46. But the *Jews* it seems laid great weight upon it, as if this one thing had been enough to confute all our Saviour's miracles, and after they had shot this bolt at him, the matter had been clearly concluded against him.

But wise and unprejudiced men do not use to be swayed and carried away with ill-natured proverbs; nor do they believe the bad characters which are given of a country, to be universally true without exception, as if every country did not yield some brave spirits, and excellent persons, whatever the general temper and disposition of the inhabitants may be observed to be; or as if a man could not be an inspired prophet, unless he were bred in a good air; nor be sent by God, unless men approved the place from whence he came. The *Bæotians* among the *Greeks* were a heavy and dull people, even to a proverb; and yet *Pindar*, a great poet and wit, was born in that country. The *Scythians* were so barbarous, that one would have thought surely no good could come from thence; and yet they yielded *Anacharsis*, none of the meanest of the philosophers. The *Idumeans* were *aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel*; and yet *Job*, one of the most excellent persons that ever lived, was born among them. God can bring forth eminent instruments out of any place and nation he pleases, *out of stones raise up children unto Abraham*. Our conceits are no rule to him, nor does he govern the world by our foolish proverbs; *His ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts*.

And thus some in our days have endeavoured to slur the reformation, by calling it *the northern heresy*; as if the light of truth were at as great a distance from these northern parts, as that of the sun, and nothing but error and heresy could come thence; which is just such a conceit, and grounded upon as wise a reason as that of the *Donatists*, who would needs have truth and the catholic church confined to *Afric*, because that was the southern part of the world, and because it is said in the Song of Solomon, concerning the church, *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, and where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon*.

Another mighty prejudice against our Saviour we find mentioned, John vii. 48. *Have any of the Rulers or Pharisees believed on him?* For this there seems to be some better colour than for the other; because the example of superiors and of persons thought to be more knowing, is considerable indeed in a doubtful case, and a good rule of action, when we have no better; but ought to be of no force to sway our judgment against clear and convincing evidence. *Zedekiah* and the princes of *Judah* would not hearken to *Jeremiah*: yet was he a true prophet for all that, tho' it was not their pleasure to think so. Sometimes there is a gross and palpable corruption in those who ought to be guides to others, and they have a visible interest in opposing and rejecting the truth. And this was the case of the *Pharisees* and *Rulers* among the *Jews* in our Saviour's time. Any one that had known them, and judged impartially concerning them, would rather have chosen to have followed any example than theirs. Religion may sometimes be in greatest danger, from those who ought to understand it best, and to be the greatest supports of it. So it was of old among the *Jews*, when the prophet complains, that *their leaders had caused them to err*: and so it hath been among christians, in the great degeneracy of the *Roman* church; their popes and their general councils, as they call them, have been the great corrupters of christianity, and seducers of christendom; which made *Luther* to say, with truth and sharpness enough, *Religio nunquam magis periclitatur quam inter reverendissimos*; *Religion is never in greater danger than among the most reverend*; meaning the pope and the cardinals: when those who ought to teach and reform others, are guilty of the greatest errors and corruptions themselves.

I will mention but one prejudice more, which we find John ix. 16. *This Man, (say the Jews concerning our Saviour) is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day*. This indeed had been a considerable exception, if it had been true; and there-

therefore our Saviour takes great care to vindicate himself from this aspersions; he shews that the law of the sabbath did not oblige in all cases, and that being a positive precept, it ought to give place to moral duties, which are of perpetual obligation, and therefore he bids them *go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*; and the plain meaning of that saying was, that when positive institutions interfere with any moral duty, they cease to oblige in that case; that the sabbath was designed for the ease and benefit of men, and not for their grievance and burden: and therefore where the life of man is concern'd, the law of the sabbath ceaseth; as in case of necessity, *David did eat of the Shew bread, and was blameless*, tho' by a positive law it was forbidden for any man to eat of it, but the *priests only*. Lastly, from a general practice in a common case among themselves, it being allowed by their own law, *to take an ox or an ass out of a pit on the sabbath day*; and therefore much more to heal one on the sabbath day, and *to loose a daughter of Abraham, that had been bound eighteen years*, as our Saviour invincibly argues.

Upon the like prejudice several churches and communions in the world will not allow others to be good christians, and in a state of salvation, because they do not lay the same weight that they do upon positive institutions, not of divine, but of mere ecclesiastical authority, in which they are more unreasonable than the *Jews*.*

* Of this
see more,
Vol. I.

Serm. 63,
64, 65.

But I proceed to a

III. Concomitant of their infidelity, and this was a childish kind of perverseness. Being strongly prejudiced against our Saviour, they were so peevish and froward, that nothing would satisfy them. And of this he himself gives us a remarkable instance, *Matth. xi. 16, 17. But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.* The business was this, the *Jews* found fault with *John the baptist*, because his habit and conversation was so rough and severe; and yet our Saviour could not please them neither, who was of a quite different temper. *John the baptist came in the way of righteousness, and they received him not*; his way was very strict and severe, *he came neither eating nor drinking*, was very strict in his diet, and manner of living, of a coarse carriage and melancholy temper, and *they said he had a Devil*. He was to be a preacher of repentance, and his garb was suitable to his employment. Our Saviour was of a more easy and familiar and conversable temper, suitable to a preacher of pardon and forgiveness: *the Son of Man came eating and drinking; and they said, Behold a wine-bibber and a glutton, a friend of publicans and sinners*. Now what could be more childish and perverse than to be pleased with nothing? By this it plainly appeared, that whatever garb he had put on, whatever his carriage had been, they would have found fault with it, and have made some exception against it; at this rate it was impossible for him to escape the censure of men so perversely disposed; and therefore our Saviour fitly compares them to *children playing in the markets*, who were neither pleased with *mourning* nor *dancing*.

And this is the humour of infidelity, and of those who oppose the truth, to cavil and make exceptions at every thing, and to argue against religion and the principles of it, from contrary topicks, and arguments that are inconsistent with one another.

There are other instances of this perverseness in the *Jews*; as that when they believed *Moses*, and had a mighty veneration for him; yet they would not believe him when he testified concerning the *Messias*. So likewise they looked upon *John the Baptist* as a prophet; but yet would give no credit to his testimony concerning *Christ*. Nay, so froward were they, that when our Saviour had wrought the greatest and plainest miracle that could be, in *feeding five thousand persons with five loaves, and two little fishes*; yet, as if this had been nothing, they still call upon him to work a miracle, *John vi. 30. What sign workest thou, that we may see and believe?*

IV. Another usual concomitant of infidelity, is obstinacy, and pertinacious persisting in error. This likewise was the temper of the *Jews*, not to be convinced by any evidence that could be offered to them. When our Saviour had several times put them to silence, so that they were not able to answer him, yet they obstinately

persisted

persisted in their former conceit, and stiffly held the conclusion, though they were not able to make good the premises, *Matt. xxii.* Our Saviour confuted the *Saducees* about the resurrection, and put them to silence; and then undertook the *Pharisees*, and they could not answer him neither; both of them continued in their opinion, though each of them thought the other to be clearly baffled and confuted.

This obstinacy of theirs our Saviour makes a great aggravation of their infidelity, *Matth. xxi. 31, 32.* *Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you by the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him. And ye when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.*

Nay, which was the most unreasonable of all, when they could not answer his arguments, nor deny the miracles which he wrought, yet they were resolved not to believe on him, nor to suffer others to confess him, *John xi. 47, 48.* After he had wrought that great miracle, in raising *Lazarus* from the dead, after he had lain four days in the grave, they were so far from owning themselves convinced by it, that hereupon they took counsel to put him to death. So the text tells us, that *many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus had done, namely, the raising of Lazarus, believed on him: but some of them went their way to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.* And now one would have thought, that either they should not have acknowledged this mighty miracle, or if they had, that they should have been convinced by it that he was from God: but the miracle was so notorious, that they could not deny it; and they were so obstinately set against him, that they would not be convinced by it; they granted the premises, and yet denied the conclusion, *ver. 47.* *Then gathered the chief priests and Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doth many miracles; if we let him alone, all men will believe on him.* And it follows, *ver. 53.* *From that day forth they took counsel together to put him to death.*

And after he was risen from the dead, and those that bare witness to his resurrection had their testimony confirmed by miracles, yet the *Jews* continued in the same obstinacy, as if they were resolved to oppose the gospel in despite of all evidence that could be brought for it. So we find *Acts iv. 15, 16.* that when the rulers and scribes beheld the man whom the apostles had healed, standing by them, it is said, *They could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it: but that it spread no further among the people, let us straightly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.* What could be more unreasonable than to own the miracle, and yet to reject the testimony?

V. Another quality which accompanied this spirit of infidelity and opposition to the truth in the *Jews*, was want of patience to consider and examine what could be said for the truth; a hastiness to pronounce and pass sentence, before they had heard what could be said for it. Thus the *Pharisees*, when they saw our Saviour cast out Devils, they presently, without any farther consideration, pronounce, that he did it *by the prince of Devils*, *Matth. xii. 24.* Had they not been headily carried on by passion and prejudice, they would never have past this rash sentence. Had they but had patience to have consider'd matters, they could not have believed, that the *Devil* was confederate with *Christ* against himself, and the interest of his own kingdom.

And as it was then, so it is at this day; many continue in unbelief and error, not because there is not evidence enough for the things proposed to their belief, but because they have not patience enough to consider what may be said for them. Nay, in the church of *Rome*, that they may retain their people in their communion, they strictly forbid all examination of their religion, or so much as to hear or read what can be said against it; because this is doubting, and doubting is next to infidelity, a mortal sin, and a temptation of the Devil. There is but one season and nick of time, wherein they will allow any of the people to examine and enquire into matters of religion, and that is when they would gain a man to their religion, and they allow it then only because they cannot help it. Some reasons they must offer to persuade men to be of their church; and when they offer them, they

they must allow them to consider them, and judge of the force of them, tho' they had much rather they would take their words for the strength and goodness of them; for they do what they can to hinder them from advising with those that will dispute the matter with them: or if they cannot prevent examination, yet they divert them as much as they can from any particular enquiry into their doctrines and practices; this they pretend is a tedious and endless course, and therefore they commonly direct them to a shorter way, which is, not to enquire first into the truth of their doctrines, and the goodness of their worship and practice; but first to find out the true church, and then learn of her what doctrines and practices are truly Christian; and by this means they get their religion swallowed whole, without any particular examination of their doctrines and practices, which will not bear the trial; and therefore to make the work short, they take it for granted, that there is always a visible catholic church; that this church is infallible in all matters of faith; and that the *Roman* church is this visible infallible catholic church, because no other church pretends to be so; as indeed there is no reason why any particular church should pretend to be catholic or universal, or to speak plainer, why a part should pretend to be the whole; and all this being admitted, there is nothing more now to be done, but to receive all the doctrines which this church teacheth, without any further examination of them, because this church being supposed to be infallible, all that she says must be true, though it appears to be never so contrary to scripture, or reason, or sense. But now in this way of proceeding, there are two or three things which seem to be very odd.

1. That men must take their religion in a lump, and not be allowed to examine the particular doctrines and practices of it: which is to say, they have an excellent religion, but men must by no means examine it, nor look into it. This looks so suspiciously, that a wise man, for this very reason, if there were no other, would reject it, because they are so afraid to bring it to a trial.

2. It seems likewise very strange, that when they go to make profelytes, they should take so many things which are in question and controversy between us, for granted; as that the church in every age is infallible, and that the church of *Rome* is the infallible and catholick church. They meet indeed sometimes with some easy and willing converts, that will meet them thus far, that is, more than half way: but what if a man will not take all this for granted, but will put them to the proof of it? Why then he is not so civil as they hoped and expected; and commonly they give over tempting him, or at least depart from him for a season, 'till they can find him in a more pliable temper; for it is a long work, and requires a great deal of time to prove some things, especially to the dull capacity of a northern heretic: besides that some things are stubborn, and will not be proved, though never so much pains be taken to do it; and so are the propositions now mentioned, towards the proof whereof I never saw any argument offered, that is within distance, or indeed within sight of the conclusion. And then,

3. It seems a very strange method of coming to know what the true doctrines of Christianity are, by first knowing which is the true church: for it is not the church which makes the doctrines of Christianity to be true, but the profession of the true Christian doctrine which makes the true church; and therefore we must first know which are the true doctrines of Christianity, the profession whereof makes the true church, before we can possibly know which is the true church; but which are the true doctrines of Christianity is not to be known but by a particular examination of them, and comparing them with the rule of the Christian faith, *the word of God*. But they that have a mind to delude men, and keep them in error, must never admit their religion to be tried by this rule. But to proceed,

VI. Another quality which accompanies infidelity and opposition to the truth, is rudeness and boisterousness, falling into uncivil terms and reproachful names. Such was the carriage of the *Jews* towards our Saviour; when they were not able to reason with him, they fell to railing at him, *John* viii. 48. When he argued against their infidelity in the calmest manner, and by the strongest and clearest arguments endeavoured to convince them of the unreasonableness of it; *Which of you, saith he, convinceth me of sin? And if I speak the truth, why do you not believe? He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.* Then answered the *Jews*, *Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan,*

maritan, and *basſ a Devil?* They preſently call him *Heretic*; for ſo the *Jews* eſteemed the *Samaritans*.

VII. Another quality near a-kin to this, is fury and outrageous paſſion, *John vii. 23.* The *Jews* were in a great paſſion againſt our Saviour, for *healing on the ſabbath-day*. When the apoſtles wrought miracles, it is ſaid, that *the High Prieſt and they that were with him were filled with indignation*. And when St. Stephen preached to them, it is ſaid, *They gnaſhed on him with their teeth*. And St. Paul acknowledgeth of himſelf, while he oppoſed the truth of chriſtianity, he was *mad againſt all that were of that way*.

VIII. And laſtly, to mention no more, infidelity and oppoſition to the truth is uſually attended with bloody and inhuman perſecution; a certain argument of a weak cauſe, and which wants better means of conviction. Thus the *Jews* treated our Saviour; when they could not deal with him by reaſon, they perſecuted him, and *ſought to kill him*, *John v. 16.* and *Chap. viii. 59.* When our Saviour had answered all their objections, and they had nothing to reply unto him, *They took up ſtones to caſt at him*; a ſign their reaſons were ſpent, and that their arguments were at an end. Thus infidelity and error betrays its own weakneſs and want of reaſon on its ſide, by making uſe of ſuch brutiſh and unreaſonable weapons in its own defence. Our bleſſed Saviour and his apoſtles never thought of propagating their religion by theſe inhuman and barbarous ways. Theſe methods are proper to the *Destroyer*, but not to the *Lamb of God*, and *Saviour of Men*. *The Son of man came not to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them*; to do good to the bodies, and to the ſouls of men; and not to deſtroy their bodies, no, not in order to the ſaving of their ſouls. All the means that he or his apoſtles uſed, were teaching and perſuading, and that with great meekneſs: *Learn of me, for I am meek*, ſaith our Lord: and the apoſtles every where command the teachers of this religion, *to ſhew all gentleneſs to all men, and in meekneſs to inſtruct thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth*. They did not go about to convert men by armed force, and ways of violence and cruelty. It is a ſign that reaſon runs very low with that religion, which hath no better arguments to perſuade men to it, than *dragoons* and the *gallies*; theſe are *carnal*, and therefore not *Chriſtian weapons*. So St. Paul tells us, *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal*; and yet they were *mighty thro' God, to ſubdue* a great part of the world to the belief and obedience of the chriſtian religion. Thus I have done with the *fourth* particular in the text, the unreaſonableneſs of infidelity, and oppoſition to the truth. The *two* remaining ones I ſhall diſpatch in a few words.

Fifthly therefore, I obſerv'd the true reaſon and account of mens oppoſition to the truth, and rejection of it; *Men loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil*. And indeed *darkneſs* is more ſuitable to a wicked and vicious life, becauſe the deformity of it is not ſo eaſily diſcovered as in the *light*; this makes the evil of men's actions more manifeſt, and their faults more inexcusable. Men may pretend other reaſons for their infidelity and oppoſition of the truth, and may ſeem to argue againſt the principles of religion in good earneſt, and againſt the reaſonableneſs and truth of chriſtianity, from a real contrary perſuaſion: but no man that hath theſe things fairly propoſed to him, and with all the advantages they are capable of, and hath the patience to conſider the true nature and deſign of the chriſtian doctrine, but muſt acknowledge it, not only to be the moſt reaſonable, but the moſt divine, moſt likely to come from God, and to make men like God, of any religion that ever yet appeared in the world. If any man reject it, it is not becauſe he hath good and ſufficient reaſons againſt it; but becauſe he is ſway'd by ſome unreaſonable prejudice and paſſion, or byaſſed by ſome luſt or intereſt, which he is ſtrongly addicted to, and loth to part with, and yet he muſt part with it, if he entertain this religion, and ſubmit himſelf to the terms and rules of it. This is that which commonly lies at the bottom of infidelity, and is the true reaſon of their oppoſition to the truth, that *their deeds are evil*. And it is natural for every man to defend himſelf, and juſtify his doings as well as he can; and if religion be clearly againſt him, to ſet himſelf with all the deſpite and malice he can againſt religion; and to hate, and with all his might to oppoſe that which contradicts that courſe which he is in love with, and is reſolved to continue in: for as our

Saviour reasons in a like case, *No man can serve two masters; but either he will hate the one, and love the other; or he will cleave to the one, and quit the other.* Men cannot entertain the truth, and retain their lusts; and therefore as our Saviour tells us immediately after the text, *Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.* The light of truth is as grievous to a bad man, as the light of the sun is to sore eyes: because it lays open and discovers the faults and vices of men, and if they entertain it, will urge them, and put them upon a necessity of reforming their wicked lives, and because they have no mind to this, therefore they resist the light, and endeavour to keep it out. The vices and lusts of men are so many diseases: and men naturally loath physic, and put it off as long as they can: and this makes many inconsiderate and wilful men to favour their disease, and take part with it against all counsel and advice; and when the great physician of souls comes and offers them a remedy, they flight and reject him, and will rather perish than follow his prescriptions.

And this was the true reason why the *Jews* rejected the gospel: they were vicious in their lives, and loth to undergo the severity of a cure; they were not willing to be saved by so sharp and unpleasant a remedy. And this is still the true reason at this day, of mens enmity and opposition to religion, because it declares against their evil deeds, and proclaims open war against those vices and lusts which they love, and are resolved to live in; so that they have no other way to justify themselves and their actions, but by condemning and rejecting that which reproves and finds fault with them.

And here I might shew more particularly, that there are *two* accounts to be given why bad men are so apt to resist and reject the divine truth, even when it is revealed and proposed to them in the fairest manner, and with the clearest evidence.

1. Because their minds are not so rightly prepared and disposed for the receiving of divine truth. And,

2. Because they have an interest against it, *their designs and deeds are evil*, they have some worldly interest to carry on, or they are in love with some vice or lust which they cannot reconcile with the truths of God and religion. But this I have done at large elsewhere*. I proceed therefore to the

*Vol. I.
Serm. 33,
34, 35.

Sixth and last particular in the text, namely the great guilt of those who reject the doctrine of the gospel. By this very act of theirs they are condemned, nay, they condemn themselves; because they reject the only means of their salvation. *This is the condemnation*, this very thing argues the height of their folly and guilt, that *when light is come, they prefer darknes before it.* If any thing will condemn men, this will; and if any thing will aggravate their condemnation, and make it above measure heavy and intolerable, this will. If it were in a doubtful matter that men made so ill and foolish a choice, the thing would admit of some excuse: but the dispute is between *light and darknes*. If the Christian religion had not so plainly the advantage of any other institution that ever was; if that holiness which the gospel commands, and that happiness which it promiseth, were not infinitely to be preferred before the ways of sin and death; the unbeliever and the disobedient might have something to say for themselves; but the case is plainly otherwise, so that whoever, having the Christian religion fairly and fully proposed to him, doth not believe it; or professing to believe it, doth not live according to it, *hath no cloak for his sin*; neither the one for his infidelity, nor the other for his disobedience: and if any thing will aggravate the condemnation of men, this will; for the greater light men sin against, the greater is their guilt; and the greater any man's guilt is, the heavier will be his doom. The Heathen world, that lived for many ages in *darknes and the shadow of death*, shall be condemned for sinning against that imperfect knowledge of their duty, which they had from the glimmering of natural light: but they shall be *beaten with few stripes*, their punishment shall be gentle in comparison; but what punishment can be severe enough for those obstinate infidels that reject the *light*, and prefer *darknes* before it; for those impudent offenders, who admit the *light* of the gospel, and yet rebel against it; who do the works of *darknes* in the midst of this *light*, at noon day and in the face of the sun? This consideration the scripture frequently urgeth upon those who enjoy the light of the gospel.

I say

say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, the very worst and wickedest of the Heathens, than for you. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? If either we reject the knowledge of the truth, or sin wilfully after we have received it, that is, apostatize either to infidelity, or impiety of life, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, to consume the adversary, that is, such implacable enemies of God and his truth; in so doing we resist and reject our last remedy; and after God hath sent and sacrificed his only Son for our salvation, we cannot in reason think there remains any more sacrifice for sin. I have gone over the several particulars in the text: I shall only make two or three inferences.

First, If the great design of the Son of God was to enlighten the world with the knowledge of divine truth, what shall we think of those, who make it their great endeavour to stifle and suppress this light, and to hinder the free communication of it? who conceal the word of life from the people, and lock up the knowledge of salvation, contained in the holy scriptures, in an unknown tongue?

Secondly, Having represented the unreasonableness of infidelity, and the evil concomitants of it in the Jews, *Let us take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, and lest any of us fall after the same example of infidelity.* Let us not reject the principles of religion, because they are inconsistent with our practices, but let us rather endeavour to reconcile our lives to the rules of religion, and resolve to reform those faults which religion reproves, and which the reason of our own minds, if we would attend to it, reproves as much as religion; a clear evidence that we are in the wrong, and religion in the right, because it hath the best and soberest reason of mankind on its side.

Let us then, with all readiness of mind, entertain that light which God hath afforded to us, to conduct us and shew us the way to happiness, whether by the principles of natural religion, or by the revelation of the gospel in its primitive purity and lustre, and not as it hath been muffled and disguised by the ignorance and superstition which prevailed in after-ages, 'till the light of the reformation sprang out, and restored a new day to us, and called us again out of darkness into a marvellous light, which, by the blessing of God, we have now enjoy'd for many years, and which we cannot go about to quench, without incurring the condemnation in the text.

Thirdly, and lastly, Let us take heed of practical infidelity, of opposing and contradicting the Christian religion by our wicked lives and actions. Though we profess to believe the gospel, yet if our *deeds be evil*, we do in effect and by interpretation reject it, and *love darkness rather than light*; though we assent to the truth of it, yet we *with-hold it in unrighteousness*, we resist the virtue and efficacy of it, and do oppose and blaspheme it by our lives; nay, we do as much as in us lies to make others atheists, by exposing religion to the contempt and scorn of such persons, and by opening their mouths against it; as either not containing the laws of a good life, or as destitute of power and efficacy to persuade men to the obedience of those laws. Where, will they say, is this excellent religion, so much boasted of? how does it appear? Look into the lives of Christians, and there you will best see the admirable effects of this doctrine, the mighty force of this institution! And what a shameful reproach is this to us! What a scandal and disparagement to our holy religion, to see some of the worst of men wearing the badge and livery of the best religion and institution that ever was in the world!

I shall conclude all with the words of the apostle, *Phil. i. 27. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; and stand fast with one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

S E R M O N CXCI.

The Grounds of bad Men's Enmity to the Truth.

J O H N iii. 20.

For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

AMONG all the advantages which God hath afforded mankind, to conduct them to eternal happiness, the light of the Christian religion is incomparably the greatest; which makes it the greater wonder, that at its first appearing in the world, it should meet with such unkind entertainment, and so fierce and violent an opposition. Of all the blessings of nature, light is the most welcome and pleasant; and surely to the mind of man, rightly disposed, truth is as agreeable and delightful, as it is to the eye to behold the sun; and yet we find, that when the most glorious light that ever the world saw visited mankind, and truth itself was incarnate, and came down from heaven to dwell amongst us, it was so far from being welcomed by the world, that it was treated with all imaginable rudeness, and was opposed by the *Jews*, with as much fierceness and rage, as if an enemy had invaded their country, with a design to take away their place and nation. No sooner did the Son of God appear, and begin to send forth his light and truth among them, by the publick preaching of his doctrine, but the teachers and rulers among the *Jews* rose up against him as a common enemy, and were never quiet 'till they had taken him out of the way, and by this means, as they thought, quite extinguished that light.

Now what can we imagine should be the reason of all this, that a person who gave such clear evidence that he came from God, that a doctrine which carries such clear evidence of its divine original, should be rejected with so much indignation and scorn? that light and truth, which are so agreeable to mankind, and so universally welcome, should be so disdainfully repulsed? What account can be given of it, but that which our Saviour here gives in the text? *Light was come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light; because their deeds are evil. For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd, (or discovered; for so the word likewise signifies, and may very fitly be so render'd in this place) but (as it follows) he that doth the truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God; that is, that they are of a divine stamp and original.* In which words our Saviour represents to us the different disposition and carriage of good and bad men, as to the receiving or rejecting of truth, when it is offer'd to them: they that are wicked and worldly are enemies to truth, because they have designs contrary to it. *Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.* And on the contrary, a good man, *he that doth the truth, and sincerely practises what he knows, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest.*

I shall not need to handle these distinctly, because in speaking to one, the contrary will sufficiently appear. That therefore which I shall speak to at this time, shall be the former of these, *viz.* The enmity of bad men, and of those who carry on ill designs to the truth, together with the causes and reasons of it. *Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be discovered.* Here our Saviour's doctrine (as I have shewn in the *three* last discourses) is represented to us by the metaphor of *light*, because it was so clear a revelation of the will of God, and our duty; and carried in it so much evidence of its divinity; it being the chief property of light to discover itself, and other things: so that those great
and

and important truths contained in our Saviour's doctrine, are the *light* here spoken of, and which men of bad designs and practices are said to hate and decline; *Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

In which words *two* things offer themselves to our consideration.

First, The enmity of wicked men to the truth: *Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light.*

Secondly, The ground or reason of this enmity, *Lest his deeds should be discovered.*

First, The enmity of wicked men to the truth: *Every one that doth evil, hateth the light.* Men of ill designs and practices hate the light, and because they hate it they shun it and flee from it, *neither cometh he to the light.* Now this enmity to truth appears principally in these *two* things, in their resistance, and in their persecution of it.

1. In their opposition and resistance of it. A bad man is not only averse from the entertainment of it, and loth to admit it, but thinks himself concern'd to resist it. Thus the *Jews* opposed those divine truths, which our Saviour declared to them; they did not only refuse to receive them, but they set themselves to confute them, and by all means to blast the credit of them, and to charge them not only with novelty and imposture, but with a seditious design, and with blasphemous and odious consequences; they perverted every thing he said to a bad sense, and put malicious constructions upon all he did, though never so blameless and innocent. When he instructed the people, they said he was stirring them up to sedition; when he told them he was the Son of God, they made him a blasphemer for saying so; when he healed on the sabbath-day, they charged him with profaneness; when he confirmed his doctrine by miracles, the greatest and plainest that ever were wrought, they reported him a magician; when they could find no fault with many parts of his doctrine, which was so holy and excellent, that malice itself was not able to misrepresent it, or take any exception to it, they endeavoured to destroy the credit of it, by raising scandals upon him for his life; because his conversation was free and familiar, they taxed him *for a wine bibber, and a glutton*: and because he accompanied with bad men, in order to the reclaiming and reforming of them, they represented him as a favourer of such persons, *a friend of publicans and sinners.*

By these and such like calumnies they endeavoured to disparage his doctrine, and to alienate men from it; being prejudiced against the truth themselves, they did what they could to keep others from embracing it; and as our Saviour tells us, *Shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, neither going in themselves, nor suffering others that were going in, to enter.*

2. The enmity of bad men to the truth likewise appears in their persecution of it, not only in those that propound it to them, but in all those that give entertainment to it: and this is the highest expression of enmity that can be, to be satisfied with nothing less than the destruction and extirpation of what we hate. And thus the *Jews* declared their enmity to the gospel. When this great light came into the world, they not only shut their eyes against it, but endeavour'd to extinguish it, by persecuting the author of this doctrine, and all those that published it, and made profession of it; they persecuted our Saviour all his life, and were continually contriving mischief against him, seeking to entrap him in his words, and so render him obnoxious to the *Roman* government, and at last putting him to death upon a false and forged accusation, and all this out of enmity to that truth which he deliver'd to them from God; as he himself tells us, *John* viii. 40. *But ye now seek to kill me, a man which hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God.*

But their malice did not rest here, they persecuted in like manner his disciples and followers, *casting them out of their synagogues, and forbidding them to speak to the people in the name of Jesus, delivering them up to councils, and condemning them to death.* Never did good men shew greater zeal and earnestness for the truth, than these wicked men did against it; so that had our blessed Saviour been the greatest impostor that ever was, and brought the most pernicious doctrine that ever was into the world, they could not have persecuted him with more rage and fury, and given greater testimony of their enmity against him. I pass to the

Second

Second thing I proposed, namely, To enquire into the causes and reasons of this enmity: *Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be discovered.* Here is the bottom of men's malice and enmity against the truth, it lays open their evil deeds and designs; men of honest intentions are not afraid of the light, because it can do them no prejudice; it shews what they ought to do, and they have a desire to know it, that they may do it: *He that doth the truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest.* Light is an advantage to good and virtuous actions, which the more they are seen and understood, the more they are approved and esteemed; but they that do evil, *love darkness rather than light*, because they are afraid their deeds should be discovered.

And there is a twofold discovery of their actions, which bad men are afraid of. They are afraid they should be discovered to themselves, because that creates trouble and uneasiness to them; and they are afraid they should be discovered to others, because that causeth shame.

1. They are afraid the evil of their actions should be discovered to themselves, because that creates guilt and trouble; men do not care to see their own faults, and to have the vileness of their deeds truly represented to them. And this no doubt was the principal reason which set the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* so much against our Saviour and his doctrine, because it discovered their hypocrisy to them: and how *beautiful* soever they appeared *without*, in their affected piety and formal devotion, yet, *like painted sepulchres, they were within full of uncleanness and rottenness.* Those real virtues which our Saviour taught, and the practice whereof he made so necessary to the eternal happiness and salvation of men, were a severe reproof of their lives and actions, and did discover to them how defective they were in that righteousness, which alone will bring men to the kingdom of God: so that his doctrine must needs be very troublesome to them, and they did not care to hear it, no more than a bad face loves to look in a true glass; they had flattered themselves before, in a conceit of their own righteousness, but when the light came, it discovered all their spots and deformities, so that they were no longer able to hide them from themselves; and this was a double trouble to them.

(1.) It robbed them of that good opinion which they had of themselves before; and it is no small vexation to a man to be put out of conceit with himself. Truth flatters no man, and therefore it is no wonder that so many are offended at it; a good man is satisfied with himself, and so would bad men fain be too; and therefore truth must needs be very unwelcome to them, because it attempts to deprive them of so great a satisfaction, and to chase away one of the most pleasant delusions in the world.

(2.) The discovery of men's faults fill them with trouble and guilt. Truth carries great evidence along with it, and is very convincing, and where men will not yield to it, and suffer themselves to be convinced by it, it gives them a great deal of disturbance, *Gravis malæ conscientie lux est*, says *Seneca*; *Light is very troublesome to a bad conscience*, for it shews men their deformities whether they will or no; and when men's vices are discovered to them, they must either resolve to persist in them, or to break them off, and either of these is very grievous.

Some men are so habituated to their vices, and so strongly addicted to them by their inclination, and attached to them by their interest, that they cannot quit them without offering the greatest violence to themselves; it is like *cutting off a right hand*, or *pulling out a right eye*, as our Saviour expresses it. Now to avoid this pain and trouble, most men, though they be convinced of their faults, chuse to continue in them, and yet this is full as troublesome as the other, though it is hard to convince men of it; there cannot be a more restless state than that of guilt, the stings and torment whereof are continually increased by men's practising contrary to the convictions of their own minds. Perhaps the trouble of repentance and reformation may be as great at first; but all this pain is in order to a cure, and ends in health and ease: but he who goes on in a bad course, after he is convinced of the evil of it, lays a foundation of perpetual anguish and torment, which, the longer he continues in his vices, will perpetually increase; so that it is no wonder if *they that do evil hate the light*, when it is every way so grievous and uneasy to them.

2. Bad men are enemies to the truth, because it discovers the evil of their actions to others, which causeth shame. The doctrine of the gospel lays open the faults of men, and upbraids them with their vices. Precepts of holiness and virtue are a publick reproof to the corrupt manners of mankind; and men hate public reproof, because it shames them before others, and exposeth them to censure and contempt. This made the *Pharisees* so offended with our Saviour's doctrine, because it was so severe a censure of their manners, and abated the reputation of their sanctity and devotion; it discover'd them at the bottom to be very bad men; and how *righteous* soever they appeared *outwardly*, to be *inwardly full of hypocrisy and iniquity*. Now reputation is a tender part, which few men can endure to have touched, tho' never so justly; and therefore no wonder if bad men be impatient of that truth which lays them open to the world, and do by all means endeavour to suppress and conceal it from themselves and others. Thus I have as briefly as I could, given you an account of the true ground and reason of the enmity of wicked men against the truth, because it discovers their errors and faults, both to themselves and others.

I shall only now draw *two* or *three* inferences from this discourse, by way of application, and so conclude.

I. From hence we may learn the true reason why men are so apt to reject and oppose the principles of religion, both of natural and revealed religion. By the principles of natural religion, I mean those which nature acquaints us with, as the being of God and his providence, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments after this life: by the principles of revealed religion, those which are revealed in the holy scriptures, especially in the gospel, which is the clearest and most perfect revelation of the divine will, that God ever made to the world. Now the reason why men oppose these principles, and endeavour to throw them off, is because they are loth to be under the restraint of them; they are so many checks and fetters to men of ill designs, and bad lives, and therefore no wonder if they bite at them, and endeavour to break them off; they contradict the lusts of men, and fly in their faces when they do wickedly; they are continually pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides, and therefore they would fain be rid of them: and therefore there is a plain reason why these men oppose the truth, and endeavour to baffle it; because it opposeth and affronts them in those wicked practices, in which they are resolved to continue. I do not say that all bad men fly thus high, as to endeavour to extinguish the belief of religion in themselves and others; but there are *three* sorts of men more especially, that think themselves concerned to promote atheism either in themselves or in others.

1. Those who are more enormously wicked, are concerned to be atheists themselves, because the principles of religion are so plainly inconsistent with their practice. This is so visible, that they cannot but see it; and therefore they must declare themselves enemies to such principles, as are so notoriously contrary to the course they live in.

2. Those who, tho' their lives are not so notoriously bad, had quicker understandings than the common sort of sinners; because these do sooner discern the inconsistency of these principles with their own actions; and being resolved not to reform, partly for the peace of their own minds, and partly to vindicate themselves to others, they declare war against these principles; and if they can overthrow them, they gain a double advantage by it. They think they shall be at more ease in their own minds, if they can but free themselves from the check and controul of these principles; and indeed they would be so, if they could root them out; but nature hath planted them so deep, and riveted them so fast, that when we have done all we can to extirpate them, they will spring up again. And then they hope also by this means to vindicate themselves to others, because they can now no longer be upbraided with the disagreement of their principles with their practice.

3. There are others, who tho' they be not atheists themselves, yet from the spirit and interest of a worldly church, are concerned to promote atheism in others. And this hath been a very common practice of the factors for the church of *Rome* in this age: when they cannot gain men directly to their religion, they fetch a strange compass, and try to make them infidels, or scepticks, as to all religion; and then they doubt not to bring them about at last to the outward profession of *their* religion,

gion, which will serve their turn well enough: for when men are once unhing'd from the principles of all religion, 'tis no hard matter for their own ease and interest to persuade them to an outward compliance with that religion which is coming in fashion, and will bring them some advantage. And this is not an uncharitable suspicion, but certain in fact and experience; that this impious method of several of the priests of the church of *Rome*, hath been one of the principal sources of the infidelity and scepticism of this age.

II. This is a great vindication of our religion, that it can bear the light, and is ready to submit itself to any impartial trial and examination: we are not afraid to expose our religion to the publick view of the world, and to appeal to the judgment of mankind for the truth and reasonableness of it: truth loves to come abroad and be seen, being confident of her own native beauty and charms, of her own force and power to gain upon the minds of men: and on the contrary, it doth justly draw a great suspicion upon any religion, if it declines the light; and nothing can render it more suspected, than for the teachers of it to make it their great care to keep people in the dark about it; or if they chance to peep into it, and to espy the defects of it, to awe them by the extremity of danger and suffering, from declaring against those errors and corruptions which they have discovered in it. I do not know two worse signs of the falshood and corruption of any church or religion, than *Ignorance* and an *Inquisition*: these two are shrewder marks of a false church, than all the fifteen marks, which *Bellarmino* hath mustered up, are, to prove the church of *Rome* to be the only true Christian church. Methinks their church and ours differ like *Egypt* and *Goshen*, in the time of the plague of darkness; only in this they differ from *Egypt*, that God sent the plague among them, but the church of *Rome* affects it, and brings it upon themselves; a darkness so gross that it may be felt; and to make it more thick and palpable, they impose upon men the belief of direct nonsense, under the grave venerable pretence of *mystery*, as in their doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. And the great design of the *Inquisition* is to awe men from reading the Scriptures, and from searching into, and examining the grounds of their religion, because they think they will not bear the test. *This is the condemnation of that Church, that when light is come into the world, they love darkness rather than light, because their doctrines and their deeds are evil.*

III. And lastly, This gives us the plain reason why some in the world are so careful to suppress and conceal the truth, and to lock up the knowledge of it from the people in an unknown tongue, and do so jealously guard all the avenues whereby light and knowledge should enter into them, is because their doctrines and designs, and deeds are evil, and they are afraid they should be discovered to be so. This is the true reason why they love darkness rather than light; for the Church of *Rome* are wise enough in their generation, to understand that nothing but the darkness of their shops can hinder people from discerning the falseness of their wares; they have several things to put off to the people, which cannot bear the trial of a clear and full light. What else makes them conceal the word of God from men? that great light which God hath set up in the world, to be a lamp to our feet, and a lanthorn to our steps; it is not to keep out heresy, but light and truth: when they cannot be ignorant that God has set up this Candle on purpose to enlighten the world, why do they put it under a bushel? but that they are guilty to themselves, that several of their doctrines and practices will be discovered and reprov'd by it.

What makes them in the face of the world to conceal from the people the second commandment in their ordinary catechisms and manuals, but lest the people should come to understand that God hath expressly forbidden the worship of images? We do not conceal those texts, *feeding sheep*, and *upon this rock will I build my church*, for fear the people should discern the Pope's supremacy and infallibility in them, but are content to run the hazard of it, and let them find them there if they can.

And then why do they mask the publick service of God, and the prayers and devotions of the people in an unknown tongue, but that they are afraid they should understand the gross superstitions and idolatry of many of them? If they mean honestly, why do they cast such a mist about their religion? why do they wrap and cover it all over in darkness, but that they are heartily afraid, that the more people understand it, the worse they will like it?

The truth is, their doctrines are evil, and *their deeds are evil*, and plainly condemned almost in every page of the bible; and therefore 'tis a dangerous book to be suffered in the hands of the people; and there is hardly any thing which the Church of *Rome* contends against, with more stiffness and zeal, than letting the people have the service of God, and the holy scriptures in a known tongue. When the office of the mass was not many years since, by some bishops and others in *France*, translated into the vulgar tongue, for the benefit of the people, how did the then Pope *Alexander* the VIIth thunder against them for it, calling them that did it *Sons of Perdition*, and condemning the thing as if it had been the wickedest thing in the world, and had directly tended to the overthrow of the Christian religion?

And then for the use of the holy scriptures in the vulgar tongue, they have put that under so many locks and keys, that the greatest caution in the world is used in the permission and allowance of it to any particular person: the priest hath not power to do it, it is only the bishops that can grant this liberty; and they do it very rarely, and only to those of whom they are very secure, and this power since that time again revoked; so that the gospel, which before our Saviour's appearance was a *mystery, hid from ages and generations*, continues so still to the common people of the church of *Rome*, and is under a thicker veil, more muffled and hid from the people, in an unknown tongue, than it was to the *Jews*, under the obscure prophecies, and dark types and shadows of the Old Testament. So that though Christ be read in their churches every day, as *Moses* was to the *Jews* in their synagogues, yet he hath a veil upon his face, as *Moses* had. *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, for ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men, and neither enter in yourselves, nor suffer those that would enter to go in.* The people of the church of *Rome* are indeed to be pitied, who are kept in ignorance against their wills; but the governing part of the church are without excuse, who to cover their errors and corruptions, hide the Scriptures from the people, *love darkness rather than light; this therefore is their great condemnation.*

Witness the black and hellish design of this day*, such as never before entered into the heart of man, to have ruined a whole kingdom at once, in its prince and representative; and by a cruel sudden blow, to have taken away the lives of the greatest and most considerable assembly in the world. They must needs love darkness, and hate the light, who have such designs to carry on, and such deeds of darkness to justify and make good; they have need to suppress, and if possibly they can, to extinguish, not only the revealed truth of God, but even the great principles of natural religion, the belief of a God, and a judgment to come, that attempt such things.

* Preached
Nov. 5.
1684.

Time was, when in despite of the clearest evidence in the world, they did confidently deny that any such design was laid by those of their religion, but that it was a contrivance of some minister of state, who drew in a few rash and hot-headed persons of desperate fortunes into it, and then betrayed and discovered them: but when the late *Popish* plot broke out here, then they were contented to own the Gun-powder treason, because they that were executed for it, did confess it, that they might with a better colour bring themselves off from this, which was so constantly denied by those who were condemned and executed for it; but this was but a shift and artifice to blind the clear evidence of this latter conspiracy, which prest so hard upon them: and since that, because they are afraid it is still believed, they have used all imaginable arts, and taken a great deal of pains to wash this black-a-moor; yet the *Negro* is a *Negro* still, and I doubt not but they are still at work, carrying on the same design, which if God do not mercifully frustrate and disappoint, is like at last to involve this nation in great misery and confusion.

But the Lord reigneth, therefore let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. He that sitteth in the heavens laughs at them, the Lord shall have them in derision. There are many plots and devices in the heart of man: but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and if we would but live up to the light which we enjoy, and adorn our reformed religion by an holy and unblameable conversation; if we would avoid those bloody and rebellious ways,

which are so natural and suitable to their religion, and so contrary to ours, and so scandalous to all religion; if we would break off our sins by repentance, and put an end to our foolish differences and disputes, by returning to the ancient peace and unity of this once happy and firmly compacted church, we have no reason yet to despair, but that God would *return to us in mercy and loving kindness*, and *think thoughts of peace towards us*, and preserve the best religion in the world to us, and our posterity after us.

Now unto him that hath delivered us so often, and so wonderfully, and doth deliver us, and we trust will still deliver us, to him be honour and glory, praise and thanksgiving, for ever and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N CXCIIL.

True Liberty, the Result of Christianity.

St. J O H N viii. 36.

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

THE meaning of these words will best appear, by considering the occasion of them, which was this. Upon our Saviour's preaching to the *Jews*, many believed on him; whereupon he tells them, that *if they continued in his doctrine*, did not only yield a present assent, but firmly embraced it, and framed their life and practice according to it, then *they would be his disciples indeed, and they should know the truth*; they would come by degrees to a more perfect knowledge and understanding of it, *and the truth would make them free*. At this expression of *being made free*, they were somewhat offended; because they took themselves to be the freest people in the world: and by virtue of God's covenant with *Abraham*, from whom they were descended, to have many privileges and immunities conferred upon them, above the rest of mankind: ver. 33. *The answered him, we be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?* They took this for a great affront to them, and an insinuation that they were in slavery and bondage. But they mistook our Saviour, who did not speak of an outward and civil servitude; and yet, if their pride and conceit of themselves would have suffered them to consider it, it was true likewise in that sense, that they had lost their liberty, being at that time in great bondage and subjection to the *Romans*. But that was not the thing our Saviour meant; he spake of a spiritual servitude, which if men were truly sensible of, is far more grievous than that of the body, and the outward man: ver. 34, 35. *Jesus answered them, Verily verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever*: that is, a servant hath no right to any thing, but is perfectly at the disposal of his master, being a part of his goods, which he may use as he pleaseth; but the Son hath a right to the inheritance, and is as it were lord of the estate; and then it follows, *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*.

In which words our Saviour seems to allude to a custom which was in some of the cities of *Greece*, and perhaps in other places, whereby the son and heir had a power to adopt brethren, and to give them the liberty and privilege of the family. If the Son of God set you free from this spiritual slavery, and adopt you to be his brethren, *Then are y.u free indeed*; not only in vain opinion and conceit,

ceit, as you take yourselves to be by virtue of being *Abraham's* children ; but really and in truth, ye shall be asserted to a truer and more excellent kind of liberty, than that which ye value yourselves so much upon by virtue of being *Abraham's* seed. *Then shall ye be free indeed.*

So that our Saviour's meaning is plainly this ; that the doctrine of the Christian religion, which the Son of God came to preach to the world, heartily embraced, does assert men to the truest and most perfect kind of liberty. I know this is but a metaphor, whereby the benefits and advantages which the doctrine of God our Saviour hath brought to mankind, are exprest and set forth to us ; but it is a very easy and fit metaphor, and does convey the thing intended very fully to our minds, and hath a great deal of truth and reality under it. And to the end we may understand it the better, I shall do these *two* things.

First, Observe to you in the general, That the Spirit of God, in the holy scriptures, delights very much to set forth to us the benefits and advantages of the Christian religion, by metaphors taken from such things as are most pleasant and desirable to men.

Secondly, I shall shew particularly in what respects the Son of God by his doctrine makes us free. For when *the Son* is said to *make us free*, we are to understand that it is by his doctrine ; for that our Saviour had expressly said before, *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

First, I shall observe to you in the general, that the Spirit of God, in the holy scriptures, delights very much to set forth to us the benefits and advantages of the Christian religion, by metaphors taken from such things as are most pleasant and desirable to men ; more especially by these *three*, of *Light*, *Life*, and *Liberty* ; than which nothing can be named that is more delightful and valuable to men.

By *Light* ; of which *Solomon* says that *it is sweet, and a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun*. Hence our Saviour is call'd *The Sun of righteousness*, Mal. iv. 2. and *the light of the world*. And ver 12. of this chapter, *I am the light of the world ; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness*. And chap. i. 9. he is called *the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world* ; or, as the words should rather be translated, *which coming into the world, lighteth every man*. He is said *To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death*, Luke i. 79. *To be a light to lighten the nations*, Luke ii. 32. And the doctrine which he preached is called *a light*, John iii. 19. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light*. And 2 Cor. iv. 6. the gospel is called *The light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*.

So likewise by the metaphor of *Life* ; which is that which men value above all other things. *John xi. 25. I am the resurrection and the life*. And John xiv. 6. *I am the way, the truth, and the life*. And because bread is the chief support of life, our Saviour is likewise set forth to us under that notion, *John vi. 33. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world*. And we are said *to have life through his name*, John xx. 31. *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name*. And the doctrine of the gospel is likewise called *the word of life*, Phil. ii. 16.

And to come to my present purpose, the benefits and advantages of the gospel are frequently represented to us under the notion of *liberty*, and *redemption* from slavery and bondage, which among men is valued next to life itself. Hence are those titles given to our Saviour, of *a Redeemer*, and *Deliverer* ; and he is said to have *obtained eternal redemption for us*, Heb. ix. 12. He is said *to have given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity*, Tit. ii. 14. And the publishing of the gospel is compared to the proclaiming of the year of *Jubilee* among the *Jews*, wherein all persons are set at liberty, Isa. lxi. 1, 2. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord*. Upon this account likewise is the gospel called by St. James, *The royal law*, and *The perfect law of liberty*, James i. 25.

Thus you see that this is one of the principal metaphors whereby the scripture sets forth to us the advantages of the Christian doctrine ; and that it is not seldom and casually used, but frequently, and upon design, as that which most fitly represents to us the benefits we have by the gospel.

Secondly, I shall now in the next place shew more particularly, in what respects the Son of God by his doctrine, may be said to *make us free*. And that in these *two* respects.

I. As it frees us from the bondage of ignorance, and error, and prejudice.

II. From the slavery of our lusts and passions.

I. It frees us from the bondage of ignorance, and error, and prejudice, which is a more inveterate and obstinate error. And this is a great bondage to the mind of man, to live in ignorance of those things which are useful for us to know, to be mistaken about those matters which are of great moment and concernment to us to be rightly inform'd in : ignorance is the confinement of our understandings, as knowledge and right apprehensions of things are a kind of liberty and enlargement to the mind of man. Under this slavery the world groaned, and were *bound in these chains of darkness* for many years, till the *light of the glorious gospel* broke in upon the world, and our blessed Saviour, who is *truth*, came to set us free.

As for the heathen part of the world, the generality of them lived in gross ignorance of God, and pernicious mistakes concerning him. So the apostle tells us, *Rom. i. 21.* that *They were vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened* : And, *Eph. iv. 17, 18.* that *They walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*. They had gross and unworthy, and false apprehensions concerning the nature of God, by which they were misled into horrible superstitions, and abominable idolatries : and in conformity to the false notions which they had of their deities, and in imitation of their fabulous stories concerning them, they were guilty of all manner of lewdness and vice ; so that thro' their mistakes of God, they were altogether estranged from that virtuous and divine life, which men ought to lead : and considering what apprehensions they had of God, many of their superstitions and vices were almost unavoidable. And by this advantage of the ignorance that mankind was sunk into, the Devil did chiefly maintain and keep up his kingdom ; it being next to impossible for men amidst so much darkness to see the right way, and walk in it. It was easy for him, when he had thus enslaved their understandings, and blinded their eyes, *to lead them captive at his pleasure*.

Yea, the *Jews* themselves, tho' they enjoyed many degrees of light beyond the rest of the world, and had the advantage of frequent revelations, yet this was but darkness, in comparison of those clear discoveries which are made to mankind by the gospel ; by which many things are revealed to us, which were *hid from ages and generations* ; and one of the most important truths, and of the greatest efficacy upon the minds of men, is brought to light, *viz.* the certainty of a future state, and the rewards of it. This the apostle tells us is *made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*, *2 Tim. i. 10.* Under the dispensation of the law, the *Jews* had very imperfect notions concerning the divine nature, and the best and most acceptable way of worshipping God, which they thought to consist in external rites, and carnal observances, in washing of the body, and in sacrifices of lambs and goats, and other creatures ; for which reason the law is frequently represented in the New Testament, as a state of *bondage* and restraint. It is called *a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear* ; a *School-master*, which kept men under a severe awe and discipline. It is represented as a prison, and a condition of restraint, *Gal. iii. 23.* *Before faith came*, that is, before the gospel was revealed, *we were kept under the law, shut up*. Upon the same account the temper and disposition of men under that dispensation, is called a *spirit of bondage* ; *ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear*, *Rom. viii. 15.* that is, ye are not still under the law. And on the contrary, the gospel is represented as a state of *liberty* and *adoption*, whereby men are freed from the bondage they were in under the law : So that there was great need in reference to the *Jews*, as well as the Hea-
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then world, of a clearer light, and more perfect revelation, to free the minds of men from the servitude of ignorance and error.

And this was a bondage indeed, worse than that of *Egypt* or *Babylon*, because they were in love with this slavery, and fond of their fetters; and when *light came into the world, they loved darkness rather than light*. So that it was one of the hardest things in the world to convince them of their ignorance, and to make them patient of instruction, and willing to be set free from those violent and unreasonable prejudices against our Saviour and his doctrine, which they were possessed withal; inso-much that the apostles found it an easier work to gain the Heathen world, than the *Jews*. For tho' the Heathens had less knowledge, yet their pride and prejudice was not so great; they were in a thicker darkness than the *Jews*; but when the light came, they were more willing to entertain it, and did not shut their eyes so wilfully against it; when the prison-doors were open, they were glad to come out, and accept of liberty; but the *Jews* were so obstinately fixt in their prejudice, that they would not let *the truth set them free*. When this *jubilee*, this *acceptable year of the Lord* was proclaimed, they refused the benefit of it; and like those who were of a servile disposition among them, they were contented to have *their ears bored through, and to be servants for ever*.

But yet it was a great liberty which the gospel offer'd to them, had they been sensible of it. For how easy is the mind of man, when it finds itself freed from those errors and prejudices, which it sees others labour under? And how does it rejoice in this liberty? Certainly one of the greatest pleasures of human nature is the discovery of truth, yea even in curious speculations, which are of no great concernment to us. How was *Archimedes* transported upon a mathematical discovery, so that he thought no sacrifice too great to offer to the gods by way of acknowledgement? But surely the pleasure is justly greater in matters of so great moment and consequence to our happiness. The light of the Sun is not more grateful to our outward sense, than the light of truth is to the soul. By ignorance, and error, and prejudice, the mind of man is fetter'd and entangled, so that it hath not the free use of itself: but when we are rightly informed, especially in those things which are useful and necessary for us to know, we recover our liberty, and feel ourselves enlarged from the restraints we were in before. And this effect the saving truths of the gospel have upon the minds of men, above any discoveries that ever were made to the world. Christianity hath set the world free from those chains of darkness and ignorance it was bound withal, and from the most dangerous and pernicious errors, and that in matters of greatest consequence and importance. This is the *first* kind of freedom, which we have by the doctrine of the gospel, freedom from the bondage of ignorance, error and prejudice, in matters of greatest moment and importance to our happiness. And tho' this liberty be highly to be valued; yet the other, which I am going to speak to, is more considerable, and that is,

II. Freedom from the slavery of our passions and lusts, from the tyranny of vicious habits and practices. And this, which is the saddest and worst kind of bondage, the doctrine of the gospel is a most proper and powerful means to free us from; and this is that which I suppose is principally intended by our Saviour. For when the *Jews* told him that they did not stand in need in any liberty, that *they were Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any*, our Saviour declares what kind of bondage and slavery he meant; *He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin*. Wickedness and vice is the bondage of the will, which is the proper seat of liberty: and therefore there is no such slave in the world, as a man that is subject to his lusts, that is under the tyranny of strong and unruly passions, of vicious inclinations and habits. This man is a slave to many masters, who are very imperious and exacting; and the more he yieldeth to them, with the greater tyranny and rigour they will use him. One passion hurries a man one way, and another drives him fiercely another; one lust commands him upon such a service, and another calls him off to another work: so that a man under the command and authority of his lusts and passions, is like the *Centurion's* servants, when *they say to him come, he must come*; and when *they say go, he must go*; when *they say do this, he must do it*; because he is in subjection to them.

How does a man lose the power over himself by any inordinate passions? How do anger and revenge hurry a man into rash and mischievous actions, which he
repents

repents of commonly as soon as they are done? How do malice and envy torment the mind, and keep it in continual labour and uneasiness? What a slave and drudge is he, who is possessed with an inordinate love for the world, and desire of riches? How does the tyranny of ambition thrust men upon dangers, and torment them with disappointment? What a bondage is it to be under the slavish fear of death? And how does every lust and vicious habit domineer over a man? so that tho' he desire and many times resolve to do otherwise, yet he is not able to assert his own liberty, and resist the weakest temptations when they come in his way.

And that which makes their condition the worse, is, that every man is wholly at first, and afterwards in some degree consenting to his own bondage. In other cases most men are made slaves against their wills, by the force and power of others: but the wicked man chuseth this condition, and voluntarily submits himself to it. There are very few to be found in the world, that are so stupid and senseless, so sick of their liberty, and so weary of their happiness, as to put themselves into this condition: but the wicked *sells himself to do wickedly*, and parts with that liberty which he may keep; and if he would resolve to do it, and beg God's grace to that purpose, none could take it from him.

And, which is an aggravation of his servile condition, he makes himself a slave to his own servants, to those that were born to be subject to him, his own appetites, and inclinations and passions. So that this is the worst kind of slavery, so much worse than that of the mines and galleys, as the soul and spirit of a man is more noble and excellent than his body.

Now the doctrine of the gospel is the most proper and effectual means in the world to free us from this servitude; by presenting us with motives and arguments to rescue our selves from this slavery, and conferring upon us strength and assistance to that end. The doctrine of our Saviour represents to us all those considerations which may convince us of the miserable bondage of those who are under the power and dominion of sin, and of the fatal inconvenience of continuing in that state; that *the end of these things* will be death: and to encourage us to vindicate our own liberty, offers us the grace and assistance of God's Holy Spirit, to help our weakness, and to strengthen our holy resolutions, and to carry us through those difficulties which of ourselves we are not able to conquer. The Son of God stands by us in this conflict, and *the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead*, works in us; and if we would make use of this strength which is offer'd to us, we may *break these bonds in sunder, and cast these cords from us: for greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world*: the Spirit of God is stronger than *that spirit which works in the children of disobedience*. So that there is nothing wanting to set us at liberty, but the resolution of our own wills. If we will *quit ourselves like men*, the power of God and his grace is ready to take our part against all our enemies. *The Son of God was manifest for this end, to take away sin, and to destroy the works of the Devil, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to deliver us from the powers of darkness*. And why should we despair of victory and success, when *the captain of our salvation*, who hath *led captivity captive*, leads us on, and as an encouragement to us, shews us his own triumphs and conquests which he hath made over sin and hell? Are we enslaved to the world, and the lusts of it? He hath *overcome the world*; and by *Faith* we may overcome it, that is, by a firm belief and persuasion of those things which he hath revealed to us; *for this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*. Does the fear of sufferings, and persecution, and death, keep us in bondage? The Son of God hath rescued us from this fear, by setting before us the glorious hopes of eternal life. For nothing makes men afraid of death, but the want of assurance of another life, and of the happiness of it: but this our Saviour hath *brought to light by the gospel*. By his own death and resurrection he hath given us perfect assurance of life after death, and a blessed immortality. And this, the apostle tells us, was one great reason why the Son of God took our mortal nature upon him, that he might conquer death for us, and free us from the slavish fear of it: *Heb. ii. 14, 15. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their*

their life-time, subject to bondage. The inferences from this discourse, shall be these two,

First, To shew us what that liberty is which the Son of God confers upon us. It is not a liberty to sin; for *that* our Saviour tells us, is a state of slavery and bondage; *He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin.* This use indeed some made of the Christian doctrine, to encourage themselves in sin, under the pretence of Christian liberty, and that in the apostles days. So St. Peter tells us, 2 Ep. ii. 9. *While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption,* and in bondage to their lusts. But nothing can be more directly contrary to the great design and intention of the gospel, which indeed promises and declares liberty; but not from the laws of God, and the obligation of their duty, but as the apostle calls it, from *the law of sin and death.* Christian liberty does not consist in being free from our duty, but in doing those things which really tend to our perfection and happiness, in being *free from sin, and becoming the servants of God.* This is the proper use and exercise of our liberty, to do what we ought, to live according to reason and the laws of God, which are *holy, just, and good.* The freedom which the Son of God designed, was our being rescued from the bondage of sin and corruption, of the Devil and our own lusts, *that being delivered from the hands of these enemies, we might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.*

Secondly, To persuade us to assert our liberty, and stand fast in it. The Son of God hath done that which is sufficient on his part to vindicate mankind from the slavery of their lusts and passions: and if we will vigorously set about the work, and put forth our endeavours, we may rescue ourselves from this bondage. And because it must be acknowledged that this is no easy work, therefore by way of direction and encouragement, I would commend to men these following particulars.

1. To consider seriously the misery and danger of this condition, and the necessity of freeing ourselves from this slavery. I have shewn that it is the worst kind of bondage, and it hath the saddest consequences. Some service, tho' it be hard and grievous, yet men are content to endure it, because it may prove beneficial to them, and is in order to a greater freedom; but the service of sin is altogether unprofitable. *What fruit had ye then, says the apostle, in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. The wages of sin is death.* All the reward that shall be given us for the service, is misery and punishment, *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul that doth evil.* So that it is necessary that we should shake off this yoke, as we desire to escape the chains of darkness, and the unspeakable and insupportable misery of another world. He that now makes us his slaves to do his work, will torment us for the doing of it to all eternity.

2. Seeing this condition is so insupportable, and the consequences of it so dreadful, let us take up a firm and manly resolution to free ourselves from this slavery. It is no easy matter to break off a vicious habit, which we long have been accustomed to; nay, perhaps it is one of the most difficult things that human nature can attempt, and therefore it requires great firmness of mind, and strength of resolution. It is next to the going against nature, and the conquering of *that*; for custom is a sort of nature, and every habit is a bowing of nature a certain way, and when nature hath once long stood bent one way, it is hard to restore it to its former condition; and nothing but a great resolution, taken up upon a full conviction of the necessity of the thing, will carry us through.

3. For the encouragement of this resolution, consider what assistance God hath promised us. Indeed when we consider the difficulty of the thing, and the weakness and unsteadfastness of our own minds, how apt we are to give over when we meet with great opposition and resistance, we might justly be discouraged in our attempts, if we had nothing but our own strength to trust to: but God hath promised to stand by us, and second us in the conflict; and if he be for us, what can stand against us? There is nothing too hard for a stout resolution back'd by the grace of God.

4. That we may not be discouraged by an apprehension of too much difficulty in the thing, consider that the main difficulty is at first. So soon as we have re-
solutely

olutely begun, the work is half done; if we can but sustain the first brunt, the enemy will give ground apace; every day we shall get more strength, and the habits of sin will be weakened. In all cases there is difficulty in breaking off a habit, and doing contrary to what we have been used and accustomed to do: but after we have practised the contrary awhile, it will every day grow more easy and pleasant; for custom will make any thing so.

5. Consider that the longer we continue in this state, the harder we shall find it to rescue ourselves from it; for sin will every day get more strength, and we shall have less; for vice is so far from being mortified by age, that by every day's continuance in it, we encrease the power of it; and so much strength as any one adds to his disease, he takes from himself. And this is a double weakening of us, when we do not only lose our strength, but the enemy gets it, and will employ it against us. Therefore let us presently set about this work, *to day, whilst it is called to day, lest we be hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin.* The longer we continue in sin, the farther God withdraws his grace from us; and not only so, but the Devil gets a greater dominion over us, and a firmer possession of us, till by degrees we do insensibly slide into that state, in which, without the miraculous grace of God, we are like for ever to continue. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also be good, that are accustomed to evil.* It is next to a natural impossibility for a man to rescue himself out of this state.

6. And *lastly*, Be not discouraged, tho' ye do not meet with that success at first, which ye expected and hoped for; tho' after several attempts to recover your liberty, ye be foil'd and cast back. It sometimes so happens that some are by a mighty resolution, and very extraordinary and overpowering decree of God's grace, reclaimed from a wicked life at once: but in the ordinary methods of God's grace, evil habits are mastered and subdu'd by degrees; and tho' we be resolved upon a better course, and entered upon it, yet the inclinations to our former course will frequently return upon us, and may sometimes too prevail. And we are not to think this strange: 'tis nothing but what is natural, and may reasonably be expected. It is no just ground of discouragement to us, if after we have engaged in a good course, we be sometimes pulled back again, and the habits which we are breaking off from gather strength, and make head again; as an enemy after he is routed, and hath begun to fly, doth frequently rally, and makes as if he would renew the fight again, and may perhaps prevail in a little skirmish: but for all this, we are nevertheless in a fair way to victory, if we will pursue our first advantage, and prosecute it vigorously. Nay, this should be so far from discouraging us, that it should make us resume new courage, that we may not lose what we have got.

I the rather mention this, because many miscarry upon this account, and many good resolutions and attempts to vindicate our liberty from the bondage of corruption, are given over and come to nothing, because men make false accounts of things, and expect to conquer and get a compleat victory at first: and indeed they are taught by those who are not well skill'd in this spiritual warfare, that this work is done in an instant, and the habits of grace and virtue are infused into men at once; and if men give back, all they had done is lost, and that they are in a worse condition, than if they had never begun: whereas usually it is quite otherwise, and the habits of goodness are acquired, as other habits are, by slow degrees at first, and with a great deal of conflict; and it is a good while before a man comes to that confirmed state, that he may be said *to have conquered*; but if he persists in his resolutions, and when he hath received some foil, take heart again, he is in the way to victory; and tho' he be not in a perfect state of acceptance with God, yet his endeavours have the acceptance of good beginnings, and he hath no reason to be discouraged at what he had reason to expect when he began this work, if he calculate things aright: and they that tell men otherwise, have taken up false notions in divinity, but do not consult human nature, and the usual progress of God's grace in the conversion of a sinner, and reclaiming him in a wicked course, and have not taken sufficient care to reconcile their notions of divinity, with the nature of things, and the certain and undoubted experience of mankind. Therefore let no man be faint and discouraged upon this account, and think the thing is not to be done, because he doth not meet with perfect success at first; for this seldom happens,

pens, and therefore ought not to be expected : but let him still go on and reinforce his resolutions, and the opposition and difficulty will abate, and the work continually grow easier upon his hand, and *the God of peace will at last tread down Satan under his feet.*

S E R M O N CXCIV.

The Duty of improving the present Opportunity and Advantages of the Gospel.

St. J O H N xii. 35.

Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you ; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.

THEN said Jesus unto them, that is, upon the discourse he had just before ^{Preached Feb. 15, 1685.} had with them, concerning his approaching death, and departure out of this world ; at the mention whereof, they were offended and troubled ; but instead of that, our Saviour puts them upon that which would be of real use and benefit to them, to improve those advantages and opportunities, which they were like to enjoy but a little while ; *Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you ; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you ; for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth.*

Yet a little while is the light with you. This our Saviour speaks of himself, and his personal presence and teaching among them ; *Yet a little while is the light with you :* for so he frequently calls himself and his doctrine. *John iii. 19. Light is come into the world. John viii. 12. I am the light of the world : he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life ;* that is, such a light as will direct him in the way to eternal life ; and *John ix. 5. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

Walk while ye have the light. Light is the opportunity of action, and going about our business, and therefore it is joined with *walking* and *working*, as in the Text I mentioned before, *I am the light of the world : he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness.* And *John ix. 4.* where the continuance of this opportunity of light is call'd *the day*, and the ceasing or withdrawing of it, *the night :* *I must work the works of him that sent me,* says our Lord, *while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work.* Therefore we should *walk* and *work* while we have the *light*.

Lest darkness come upon you. And this will be a dismal and fatal time, when all opportunity of *walking* and *working* will be at an end ; for when *the light* hath left us, we shall not be able to see what to do, or whither to go, as our Saviour adds to enforce his exhortation of making use of the present advantages and opportunities. *Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you : for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth.*

All this our Saviour plainly speaks to the *Jews*, with relation to his own personal presence and preaching among them, which he tells them would shortly cease, and be at an end. In which sense these words do not concern us, but only the *Jews* at that time, to whom they were spoken ; but by an equality of reason, the advice

here given by our Saviour, first and immediately to the *Jews*, may be recommended to us, in the general reason and intention of it; to us, I say, who, tho' we do not enjoy the light of Christ's personal presence, yet we have the light of his doctrine, and the power and presence of his Spirit going along with it, and supplying the absence of his person; so that in effect we have all the advantages and means of salvation, which the *Jews* had; and we know not how long they may be continued, or how soon they may be taken from us; and therefore the general reason and intention of this advice concerns us equally with the *Jews*, and considering the uncertainty of the continuance of the means and opportunities of salvation, either to a particular people or person, we may very well apply these words of our Saviour to ourselves, and as if they had been spoken by him to us as well as to the *Jews*; *Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.*

Abstracting then from the particular occasion and meaning of the words, I shall prosecute the general reason and intention of them, as it may be accommodated to us, and that in these following particulars.

First, As we have the like means and opportunities of grace and salvation as the *Jews* had.

Secondly, In that the season of their continuance is uncertain to us, as well as it was to them; we know not how long they may be continued, nor how soon they may be taken from us.

Thirdly, In that the same duty and obligation lies upon us, of improving the present advantages and opportunities which we enjoy. *Walk while ye have the light.*

Fourthly, In that we may justly apprehend the like danger and dismal consequence of being deprived of these happy opportunities and advantages. *Lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.*

Fifthly, I shall consider by what things God is more especially provoked, to deprive a people of the means and opportunities of grace and salvation.

And then, *lastly*, What is the way and means to prevent so dismal a judgment, and procure, if it may be, *a lengthening of our tranquility.* I shall go over these particulars as briefly as I can.

First, That we have the like means and opportunities of grace and salvation as the *Jews* had; not the very same in kind, and all the circumstances of them, as I noted before, but the same equivalently, and in substance, and to all the purposes of our eternal salvation and happiness, if we make a right use of them. The *Jews* had the personal presence and preaching of Christ among them; they did converse familiarly with him, *did eat and drink in his presence*, and heard him *teach in their streets*; which was a very valuable and signal privilege, vouchsafed only to that people, and only in that age. For as to his personal presence and conversation, *he was not sent, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

But we have still the same means and advantages in substance, which they had; *the gospel is preached to us, as well as to them*; we have all the light and direction concerning our duty, and all the encouragement to holiness and obedience, which they had; and there is still the same inward operation and concurrence of God's Holy Spirit, accompanying his word, and making way for the entertainment of it; if there be but the same *obsequiousness of faith* in us, and readiness to receive the truth in the love of it, that we may be saved.

Nay we have several advantages above them; that the christian religion does not lie under those prejudices in respect of us, which it did with them; it hath been now for many ages received and established among us, and the prejudice of education is on its side; and it hath had great and manifold confirmation given to it, since our Saviour's time, by the wonderful success and prevalency of it in the world, notwithstanding all the disadvantages it lay under, and the mighty opposition that was raised against it, by the remarkable fulfilling of many of our Saviour's predictions concerning the final destruction of the temple at *Jerusalem*, and the desolation of that city, and the dispersion of the *Jewish* nation over the world, and their being *bated of all nations*, which hath now continued for above sixteen hundred years, and we see it at this day, as if the providence of God had ordered

it on purpose, for a standing monument and testimony in all ages, of the truth of the christian religion.

So that blessed be God, there is no want of means to bring us to the knowledge of the truth, that we may be saved; no want of evidence to confirm to us the truth of this religion: there is nothing wanting on God's part; if there be any failure and defect, it is ours, who will not walk in the light, while we have it; nor know in this our day the things which belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes.

Secondly, The season of the continuance of these means of grace and salvation, which are afforded to us, is uncertain to us, as well as it was to them. We know not how long they may be vouchsafed to us, nor how soon they may be taken away from us: *Yet a little while the light is with you*, saith our Saviour to the Jews, meaning, that he himself should shortly be put to death, and removed from them. This is not just our case: but thus far it agrees, that the light of the gospel, and the blessed opportunities which thereby we enjoy, are of an uncertain continuance, and may be of a lesser or longer duration, as God pleaseth, and according as we make use of them, and demean ourselves under them. I remember there is a very odd passage in Mr. Herbert's poems, which whether it be only the prudent conjecture and foresight of a wise man, or there be something more prophetic in it, I cannot tell; it is this:

*Religion stands on tiptoes in our Land,
Ready to pass to the American Strand.
When Seine shall swallow Tiber, and the Thames,
By letting in them both, pollute her Streams,
Then shall Religion to America flee:
They have their Times of Gospel, even as we.*

The meaning of it is this, that when the vices of Italy shall pass into France, and the vices of both shall overspread England, then the gospel will leave these parts of the world, and pass into America, to visit those dark regions, which have so long sat in darkness and the shadow of death. And this is not so improbable, if we consider, what vast colonies in this last age have been transplanted out of Europe into those parts, as it were on purpose to prepare and make way for such a change. But however that be, considering how impiety and all manner of wickedness do reign among us, we have too much cause to apprehend, that if we do not reform and grow better, the providence of God will find some way or other to deprive us of that light, which is so abused and affronted by our wicked and lewd lives; and God seems now to say to us, as our Lord did to the Jews, *Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you*. I proceed to the

Third particular, that there is the same duty and obligation upon us, that was upon the Jews, of improving the present advantages and opportunities of salvation, which we enjoy; and our Lord says to us, as well as to them, *Walk while ye have the light*. He expects from us, that we should make use of those blessed opportunities, and answer those manifold advantages, which are afforded to us, above most nations of the world; that we should improve our knowledge in religion, and advance daily in the practice of it; that we should work while it is day, and that the more light we have, the better our lives should be. For this is to walk in the light; to make use of the present advantages and opportunities, and to be active and industrious to work out our own salvation; to be fruitful in every good word and work, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. The apostle St. Peter tells us at large, what obligation the knowledge of the gospel lays upon all christians, to make answerable improvement in all goodness and virtue, 2. Pet. i. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, thro' the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your

faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. If the gospel have not this effect upon us, if we make no use of the light of it, we do not consider that the proper effect of the christian religion, is to purge men from those sins and vices which reigned in them before; and if it have not this effect upon us, it had been better for us to have been without this light and knowledge. So the same apostle declares, chap. ii. 21. *For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.* I proceed to the

Fourth particular, That if we make no improvement of these happy advantages and opportunities, we may justly apprehend the like danger, and dismal consequences of being deprived of them. *Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth.* God's dealing with the Jews upon this provocation was very terrible; and, as the apostle saith upon another occasion, *it serves for an example and admonition to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come.* They who not only opposed and rejected that light which God sent among them, but did what in them lay to extinguish and put it out, by putting to death the Son of God, deserved to have been immediately deprived of that light, and to have been left in utter darkness: but God was pleased in his great mercy to grant a reprieve to them, and to continue the great blessing of the gospel to them for forty years longer: but when, notwithstanding this, they still continued impenitent, God at last withdrew this light, and by a particular providence gave warning to the Christians to flee from Jerusalem, just before the siege was laid to it; and then darkness came upon them indeed, and they knew not whither they went, nor what they did; the things of their peace were then hid from their eyes, because they would not know the time of their visitation. They fell into the greatest disorders and confusions, and, by the just judgment of God, were strangely blinded and hardened to their own ruin; and being forsaken of God, and of his glorious gospel, which they had rejected, they exercised all sorts of violence and cruelty upon one another, and were abandon'd to all manner of wickedness and folly; not only offending against their own law, for which they pretended so great a veneration, but committing things contrary to all laws of nature and humanity; as may be seen at large in the history of the siege of Jerusalem, written by Josephus, who lived in that time.

And there is the like danger, I do not say of the very same judgments, (for there was something peculiar in their case, they not only rejecting and abusing the gospel, but killing and crucifying the Son of God, who brought those glad tidings to them;) but of very great and dismal calamities, if ever we provoke God by our abuse of the gospel, and great unfruitfulness under it, to deprive us of so invaluable a blessing. Whenever that leaves us, we may expect the most dismal judgments and calamities to break in upon us.

For that parable concerning the husbandmen, who instead of rendering to their lord the fruits of his vineyard in due season, evilly entreated, and killed those whom he sent to them; I say, this parable, though it immediately respected the Jews, yet it does in proportion concern all that live unfruitfully under the gospel: *Mat. xxi. 40, 41. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.* And ver. 43, 44. *Therefore I say unto you, says our Lord, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

The removal of the gospel from any people, as it is the greatest judgment in itself, so it is likely to be accompanied with the greatest temporal miseries and calamities:

mities; and so in fact it hath happened not only to the *Jews*, whose case, as I said before, hath something in it peculiar, but to other churches and nations: To the seven famous churches of *Asia*, the cities of them being demolished and laid waste, and the very place of several of them hardly known at this day. And so likewise it hath happened to the flourishing churches of *Africa*, where christianity is extinguish'd, and the place of them now the great seat of barbarism and slavery.

And God seems to set these examples before us, as a dreadful warning and admonition to us, and to say to us as he did to the people of *Jerusalem*, Jer. vii. 12. 13, 14, 15. *But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you, and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren.* I proceed to the

Fifth particular I mentioned, which is to consider, by what means God is more especially provoked to deprive a people of the light of the gospel, and the means of salvation. By these *two* more especially; by a general barrenness and unfruitfulness under them; and by a general impiety and wickedness.

1. By a general barrenness and unfruitfulness under the means and opportunities of salvation plentifully afforded to us. This our Saviour represents to us in the parable of the husbandmen, which I mentioned before, *who render'd no fruit of the vineyard let out to them, for which they are threaten'd to have the vineyard taken from them, and let out to other husbandmen, who will render the fruits of it in their seasons.* And in the same chapter, *Mat. xxi. 19.* we find our Saviour cursing the fig-tree, which he saw in the way, because he found nothing thereon but leaves only. Leaves are the outward shew and profession of religion; but if there be no fruit, we may justly fear a curse: for our Saviour did not curse the fig-tree for its own sake, but for our example. *Sterilitas nostra in ficu vapulat; Our barrenness is corrected and chastised in the curse which he pronounced upon the fig-tree.* To the same purpose there is a remarkable parable of a barren fig-tree, and of the husbandman's patient expectation of fruit from it, *Luke xiii. 7. 8. 9.* after three years waiting. *Then said he unto the dresser of this vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none. Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.* It is literally true, that fruit may be expected from a fig-tree, at farthest the third year; and if in that time it doth not bear, it is almost in vain to expect it: but our Saviour intended by this parable to reprove the *Jews*, among whom he had taken so much pains for *three years*, and was now upon his *fourth*, resolving with the utmost patience to expect the fruit of repentance, and obedience to his doctrine, and then to leave them, and withdraw that light from them which they made no use of: and yet after this, he continued his apostles among them, who preached the doctrine of life and salvation to them for many years, before he punished their barrenness under all those means, by taking away his gospel from them, and giving them up to utter ruin and destruction.

2. Another and higher provocation of Almighty God to take away his gospel from a nation, is great and general impiety and wickedness, an universal corruption and depravation of manners. When *the vineyard* which God hath planted with so much care, doth not only not bring forth good grapes, but bring forth wild grapes, as it is in the parable of the prophet *Isaiab*, concerning the house of *Israel*; then God will break down the hedge of it, and lay it waste; and will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it. When no means will prevail upon a people to bring them to goodness, God will then give over all care of them, and deprive them of the means whereby they should be made better. When they do not only frustrate his expectation, but do quite contrary to what he looked for, he will be no farther concerned for them. So we find in the application of that parable, *Isaiab v. 7.* *For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah*

Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. And this we find under the gospel, Heb. vi. 7, 8. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briars, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. Briars and thorns are not mere unfruitfulness under the gospel, but contempt of it, and affronting it by our wicked lives. When infidelity and contempt of religion appear openly in a nation, and impiety and vice grow impudent and universal, even when the gospel shineth in its clearest and strongest light, and the wrath of God, not only in his word, but by his providence, and by terrible things in righteousness, is so plainly revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; when people are taught their duty, and the true knowledge of God, but will receive no instruction, but persist in their lewd and vicious courses, and commit iniquity with greediness; this, if any thing, is a just provocation of Almighty God to remove his candlestick from such a nation as this, and to leave them in darkness; since light hath no other effect upon them, but to make them more wild and extravagant. There remains only the

Sixth and last particular, which I mentioned, to be spoken to, namely, What is the way and means to prevent so dismal a judgment, and to procure, if it may be, a lengthening of our tranquility, and a longer enjoyment of the means and opportunities of grace and salvation. And our best direction in this case, will be to follow the counsel which the Spirit gives to the seven churches of Asia, to prevent the removing of their candlestick out of its place, that is, their being deprived of the light of the gospel, which shone so clearly among them. He then that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 5. Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. To the church of Smyrna, ver. 10. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the Devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. To the church of Pergamos, ver. 16. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly. To the church of Sardis, chap. iii. ver. 2, 3. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. To the church of Laodicea, ver. 19. Be zealous therefore, and repent.

You see what are the means prescribed by the Spirit of God, to prevent the removing of our candlestick out of its place; to be sensible of our great degeneracy from our primitive piety, and the strict practice of religion; and to exercise a deep repentance for it, and effectually to reform, and do our first works. Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works. And then great vigilancy and watchfulness, that we be not surprized before we are aware: Be watchful; for if thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief; and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Now watchfulness implies great sobriety and temperance, and is usually joined with fervent and earnest prayer: Watch ye therefore, and pray always. Next, to hold fast the doctrine which we have received and heard, the faith which was once delivered to the saints, as St. Jude calls it. Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast. And lastly, Zeal for God's glory, and an undaunted resolution to adhere to it, notwithstanding all dangers and sufferings. Be zealous, fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer, but be thou faithful unto the death.

If we follow this counsel, we may hope, nay, we may be assured that God will still continue to us the blessed means and opportunities of grace and salvation; that our pastors shall not be removed into corners, but that our eyes shall still see our teachers; that God will not let darkness come upon us: or if the light of the gospel should be obscured and eclipsed, that it will be but for a little while, and will soon pass over. But if we will not hearken and obey, if we will not repent and do our first works, we have reason to apprehend, that God will come against us quickly,

and remove our candlestick out of its place, and take away that light which we have abused, and carry it into some other quarter of the world; and, as our Saviour threatens the Jews, *that the kingdom of God shall be taken from us, and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it.*

I shall only add that counsel given by the prophet *Daniel* to king *Nebuchadnezzar*, and which is very proper for a people and nation, and likewise for particular persons, for the prevention of spiritual as well as temporal judgments, *Dan. iv. 27. Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thy iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.* Nothing so likely, not only to reconcile God to us, but to turn away his judgments from us, as repentance and reformation of our wicked lives, and the practice of alms and charity. *Alms shall deliver from death,* saith the wise-man, speaking of the benefit that redounds to particular persons: and by parity of reason, the charity and alms of a great number may save a nation, both from temporal and spiritual judgments: charity and alms to the poor, especially those that are poor and destitute, by *forsaking all for God and his truth.* And nothing gives greater hopes of God's mercy to us, than that general charitable disposition which appears among us.

What I have said needs no long application; I shall therefore do it in very few words. This calls upon the whole nation, and every one of us, *to remember from whence we are fallen, and to repent and do our first works;* to endeavour to recover that ancient piety and virtue which flourished in the days of our fore-fathers, and was so great an ornament to our holy religion. Blessed be God, that by his goodness, and the protection of a gracious prince, we still enjoy the blessed means and opportunities of grace and salvation: but if we be still unfruitful under them, and will not *walk in the light,* the just providence of God may have a thousand ways to deprive us of it, and *to bring darkness upon us.*

And what I have said in general to the whole nation, and what our Saviour here says to the Jews, we may accommodate every one to ourselves. *Yet a little while the light is with us, let us walk in the light, while we have it, lest darkness come upon us.* We know not how long the opportunity of life, as well as of grace, may be continued to us; they may be taken from us, or we may be cut off from them.

The season of our solemn repentance is now approaching; let us improve it, as if it were to be our last opportunity of making our peace with God: and let us lose no time, lest we die in our delay, and in our security we be destroyed.

I will conclude with the earnest exhortation of the prophet *Jeremiah*, chap. xiii. ver. 16. *Give glory to the Lord your God, that is, repent, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.* To which I will only add the advice of our blessed Saviour, *Luke xxi. 36. Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.*

S E R M O N C X C V .

The Folly of hazarding Eternal Life for Temporal Enjoyments.

M A T T H. xvi. 26.

*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

TH E great question that a wise man puts to himself in any design or undertaking, is this, What shall I be the better for it, if I obtain what I seek for? If all things succeed according to my desire, what benefit and advantage will it be to me? Or if I gain in one respect, shall I not be as great, or a greater loser in another? When all things are calculated and cast up, what will be the foot of the account? Upon the whole matter, and in the final issue and result of things, what will be the gain or loss? For though the advantage appear never so great in one respect, yet if this be over-balanced by a greater hazard and loss in another kind, far more considerable; it is upon the whole matter a foolish bargain, and a wise-man will not meddle with it. And this is the question which our Saviour here puts, *What is a man profited? &c.*

For the understanding of which words, we must look back to the verses immediately before, wherein our Saviour tells his followers upon what terms they may be his disciples, and list themselves in his service, ver. 24, 25 *If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it;* that is, whosoever by declining the profession of the gospel for fear of persecution, shall hope to save this temporal life, shall lose that which is infinitely more considerable, eternal life: and whoever for my sake and the gospel's shall expose himself to persecution, and the loss of this temporal life, shall find a better life in lieu of it, shall at last be made partaker of eternal life. And this certainly is wisdom, not to lose that which is more valuable, for the purchasing of that which is less considerable; *For what is a man profited, &c.*

What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Here our translators have unnecessarily changed the signification of the same word that was used before: for the word here translated *soul*, is the very same which is used for *life*, in the verse before; and there's no reason to alter the rendering of it; for the sense is very current thus: *Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?*

This was a proverbial speech used among the Jews, to signify that men value *life* above any thing in this world, and it seems to allude to that expression in *Job*, *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life;* that is, men will part with any thing in this world to save their lives.

Now this proverbial sentence, which the Jews used concerning this temporal life, our Saviour does very fitly apply to the purpose he was speaking of, and argues *a fortiori* from this temporal life to eternal life. For if we think all that we have well bestowed to ransom our lives, then much more should we be willing to part with this mortal life, and all the enjoyments of it, to purchase eternal life, which doth in true value more exceed this life, than this life does any thing else in this world.

And that our Saviour doth apply this proverb of the *Jews* to a higher purpose, namely to eternal life, is plain, from what he adds in the verse after the text, *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his father, with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works*; that is, there is another life after this, wherein men shall be happy or miserable, according as they have behaved themselves in this world, and then it will appear who have made the best bargain, and who at last will prove the greatest gainers, they who by following me have hazarded this temporal life, and receive in lieu of it life eternal; or they who by denying me, have secured their temporal lives, but forfeited the eternal life and happiness of the next world.

So that the meaning and force of our Saviour's argument is plainly this: what advantage would it be to any man, if he could gain the whole world, and should be ruin'd for ever? or what would a man that had brought himself into this miserable condition, give to redeem and rescue himself out of it?

And that this is plainly our Saviour's meaning, will appear, if we consider how St. *Luke* expresseth the same thing, *Luke ix. 25. What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, and be cast away?* So that the emphasis and force of our Saviour's argument, is not to be laid upon the word *soul*, as our translators seem to have laid it; for St. *Luke* hath omitted this word: but it lies in the application of this proverbial speech, which the *Jews* used concerning this temporal life, to life eternal.

Having thus cleared the true meaning and intention of these words, I shall consider in them, what may be most useful for us to fix our thoughts and meditations upon.

In these words we have *two* cases supposed, and a question put upon each of them.

First, Suppose a man should gain the whole world, and ruin himself for ever, what would be the advantage of it? *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself?*

Secondly, Suppose a man had made such a bargain, and undone himself for ever, to gain the world: when he comes to be sensible of his folly, what would he not give to undo this bargain? *What will a man give in exchange for his soul?* that is, to redeem and recover what he hath lost.

And indeed these questions carry their own answer and resolution in them. Suppose a man should gain the whole world, and ruin himself for ever, what advantage would it be to him? would it be any? No, certainly very far from it; for the words are a *μεῖωσις*, and signify more than they seem to express; *What is a man profited?* that is, he would be so far from being a gainer, that he would be a vast loser by it.

And suppose a man had made such a bargain, had thus undone himself to gain the world, would he not reflect severely upon his own folly afterward? Yes certainly he would give the whole world, if he had it, to undo it again.

So that the sense of these words may be resolved into these *two* propositions.

First, That it is a foolish bargain for a man to lose his soul, and forfeit his eternal happiness, upon any terms, tho' it were to gain the whole world.

Secondly, That whoever makes this bargain, will one time or other sadly rue it, and be sensible of the monstrous folly of it. *What would a man give in exchange for his soul?* that is, what would he not give to be put in his former condition, and be left to make a new choice?

First, That it would be a most foolish bargain, for a man to purchase the whole world with the loss of his soul, and his eternal happiness.

The folly of this one would think sufficiently evident at first sight; yet we see men every day guilty of it, so that either they do not discern it, or they do not consider it; therefore to make men sensible of their monstrous folly herein, we will consider these *two* things.

I. How inconsiderable the purchase is. And,

II. How great a price is paid for it. For that is a foolish bargain, when we pay a great deal too much for a thing, a mighty price for that which is little worth.

1. the purchase is inconsiderable. Our Saviour here puts the case to the greatest advantage on the purchaser's side; and makes the very best of it; he supposeth the gain much greater than any man ever made, he puts a case next to an impossibility, that *a man shall gain the whole world*, which no man ever did, or was in any probability of doing. *Alexander* bid fairest for it, and because he over-run a few great countries, is called *a conqueror of the world*: but let a man survey the globe, and he will soon see how small a part of the world he had mastered; it was but inconsiderable in comparison of the rest of the then known world; and much less if we take in those vast and spacious regions, which have since been discover'd: so that if he had understood either the world or himself better, he might have spared his crying for want of more to subdue. But suppose a man could *gain all the world*, and command all the conveniencies and pleasures of it, yet all this, if it be duly weighed, will be found to be no great purchase, especially if we consider these three things.

1. If we had it all, yet the great uncertainty of holding it, or any part of it.
2. The impossibility of using and enjoying it all.
3. If we had it, and could use it all, the improbability of being contented with it.

If a man had the whole world, 'tis uncertain whether he could hold it, or any part of it for any time; if he should hold it, it is impossible he should use and enjoy it all; if he could use it, it is probable he would not be contented with it: and what a goodly purchase is this; when it is all of it uncertain; and the greatest part of it useless to us; and when we have it, we are as far from satisfaction, as if we were without it? All these considerations must needs mightily sink the value of this purchase, and take us off from our fondness of a small part, when the whole is so inconsiderable.

1. If we had it all, the uncertainty of holding it, or any part of it. The very supposition of *gaining the world* doth imply, that it is *lost* from those that had it before; which shews the possession of these things to be uncertain, and that they are not sure to continue in the same hand. When *Alexander* conquered *Darius*, and took his kingdoms, just so much as *Alexander* got, *Darius* lost; so that if a man could gain the whole world from those who are now the lords and possessors of it, the very gaining it from others, must needs be a demonstration to him of the fickleness and uncertainty of these things.

No man is sure of any thing in this world for his life, or for any considerable part of it: and if he were, yet no man is sure of his life for one moment. How many ways hath the providence of God to change the greatest prosperity of this world into the greatest misery and sorrow, and in an instant to overturn the greatest fortune, to throw down the proudest aspirer, to impoverish the wealthiest prince, and to make extremely miserable, the most happy man that ever was in this world? This change of fortune may be made by the rapine of our enemies, or the treachery of our friends; by a storm at sea, or a fire at land; by our own folly, or by the malice of others, or by the immediate hand of God.

Nay, all the outward circumstances of happiness may continue firm and unshaken, and yet a man may be extremely miserable by the inward vexation and discontent of his own mind; and if riches, and greatness, and prosperity would stick by us, we ourselves are fickle and uncertain. *Our life is a vapour* easily blown away, and tho' it be the foundation of all other enjoyments in this world, yet it is as frail and inconstant as any of them; so that if a man could gain the whole world, yet this great purchase would be clogged with a double uncertainty, either of losing it, or leaving it; either of having these taken from us, or ourselves snatch'd from them.

2. Suppose a man had gained the whole world, and were sure to keep it for a considerable time, yet it is impossible he should enjoy it all. Tho' no man yet ever had, yet it is possible he may have a title to the whole world, and a great deal of care and trouble to secure that against the violence and ambition of others: but a title to a thing is one thing, and the real use of it another. There are a great many things in the world, of which no man ever yet understood the true nature and proper use; to these a man may have a title, and be actually possess'd of them; yet no man can be said to enjoy any thing farther than he understands the nature and use

use of it. But suppose this great man had a mind and understanding vast and boundless as his dominion and possessions are; yet he could enjoy but a very small part of what he possesseth: there are millions in the world, that in despite of him would share these things equally with him; equally, I say, to all the purposes of human life, and of a temporal felicity, and enjoy as much as he.

It may perhaps give a man some imaginary pleasure, to survey in his thoughts how much he hath the command of; but when he hath done, he cannot tell what to do with the hundred thousandth part of what he possesseth, he cannot so much as have the slight and transitory pleasure of *beholding it with his eyes*, any otherwise than in a chart or map, which every man else may do as well as he; but as to all real benefits and advantages, he can enjoy but a very small part of the world, according to the necessity and the capacity of a man.

He hath indeed wherewithal to make himself more soft and delicate, wherewith to surfeit sooner and to be sick oftner than other men; but whatever can minister to true pleasure and delight, and serve any real occasions of nature, there are thousands in the world will enjoy as well as he. He may have the opportunity of cloying himself with the sight of more dishes, and of being almost every day stifled in the crowd of a numerous train, and of doing every thing with a thousand eyes upon him; but he must of necessity want both the real pleasure and enjoyment of a great many things, which even a poorer man may have; he can neither eat with that appetite, nor sleep with that pleasure that a labouring man does. The constant fulness both of his stomach and table, make him incapable of ever having a feast; and the height and prosperity of his fortune, keep him from having any friends; or which comes all to one, from knowing that he hath any; for *that* no man can know, till the change of his condition give him the opportunity to discern between his friends and his flatterers.

So that if a man could *gain the whole world*, it would be no such mighty purchase; and the very first thing such a man would do, if he were wise enough to contrive his own happiness, would be to take so much to himself, as would serve all the real uses and conveniences of human life, and to rid his hands of the rest, as fast as he could. And who can think it reasonable, eagerly to desire and seek after that, which a wise man would think it reasonable to part with if he had it?

3. If it were possible that one man could *gain*, and really *use all the world*, it is a thousand to one this man would find no great happiness and contentment in it; because we see in daily experience, that it is not the increase of riches, or the accessions of honours, that give a man happiness and satisfaction; because *this* does not spring from external enjoyments, but from the inward frame and disposition of a man's mind: and that man who can govern his passions and stint his desires, will as soon find contentment in a moderate fortune, as in the revenues of a Kingdom; and he that cannot do this, is not to be satisfied with abundance; he hath an unnatural thirst, like that of a dropsy, which is sooner quenched by abstinence, than by drinking; the more he pours in, the more he is inflamed.

He that considers the world, may easily observe, that poverty and contentment do much oftner meet together, than a great fortune and a satisfied mind. All fulness is naturally uneasy, and men are many times in greater pain after a full meal, than when they sat down. The greatest enjoyments of this world, as they are *vanity*, so they are usually attended with *vexation of spirit*.

God hath so contrived things, that ordinarily the pleasures of human life do consist more in hope than enjoyment; so that if a man had *gained all the world*, one of the chief pleasures of life would be gone, because there would be nothing more left for him to hope for in this world. For whatever happiness men may fancy to themselves in things at a distance, there is not a more melancholy condition, than to be at the top of greatness, and to have nothing more left to aspire after; and he is a miserable man, whose desires are not satisfied, and yet his hopes are at an end; so that if a man could do what *Alexander* thought he had done, conquer the whole world, when that work was over, he would in all probability do just as *he* did, sit down and weep that there were nothing more left for him to do. You see then what the purchase amounts to; suppose a man could *gain the whole world*, he would be as far from contentment, as he that possesseth the least share and portion of it.

Let us now consider in the

II. Place, the price that is here supposed to be paid for it; the man *gains the whole world*, but *he loseth his own soul*, that is, he ruins himself for ever; he deprives himself of a happiness infinitely greater than this world can afford, and that not for a little while, but for ever; and he exposeth himself to a misery so great, as no man that considers it, would endure for one hour, for all the pleasures and enjoyments of this world.

And now the purchase may be allowed to be very considerable, when so intolerable a price is paid for it; when for the present enjoyment of so short and imperfect a felicity, as this world can afford, a man hath quitted his interest in a blessed immortality, and chose to *dwell with everlasting burnings*. I am really afraid to tell you how much misery is involved in these few words, of *losing a man's soul*; the consideration of it is so full of horror, that I am loth to enter into it.

The loss is *great and irreparable*; great beyond all imagination; for he that loseth his soul, loseth *himself*; not his *being*, that would be a happy loss indeed, but *that* still remains to be a foundation of misery, and the scene of perpetual woe and discontent. The loss of the soul implies the loss of God, and of happiness, and all that is desirable and delightful to a reasonable creature; nay, it does not only signify the privation of happiness, but the infliction of the greatest misery and torment. Could I represent to you those dismal prisons, into which wicked and impure souls are thrust, and the miseries they there endure, without the least spark of comfort, or glimmering of hope, how they are compass'd about with woe, and lie wallowing in the flames, how they sigh and groan under the intolerable wrath of God, the insolent scorn and cruelty of Devils, the severe lashes, and raging anguish, and fearful despair of their own minds, without intermission, without pity, without hope; could I represent these things to you, you were not able to hear the least part of what these miserable wretches are condemned for ever to endure.

And the loss is not only vast, but *irreparable*; the soul once lost, is lost for ever. We may part with our souls to gain the world; but if we would give a thousand worlds, we cannot regain our souls. *The redemption of a soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever*. The loss of it is so great, that nothing can recompense it; and so fatal, that it is never to be repair'd. The happiness that the man parts withal, who makes this mad bargain, is so vast, both in respect of the degree and duration of it, that nothing can make amends for so great a loss; and the sufferings which the man exposeth himself to are so dreadful, *that all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them* can be no temptation to any man, to run the hazard of enduring them. *Epicurus*, who very well understood the rates of pain and pleasure, is peremptory in this assertion, that it is great folly for any man to purchase pleasure with equal pain; because there is nothing got by it, they ballance one another: it must surely then be a strange madness in any man, for the transitory delights of this world, to forfeit the eternal pleasures of God's presence, and for the joys of a moment to live in pain for ever.

And is it not then a prodigious folly that possesseth sinners, who can be contented to venture their souls, and their happiness, their immortal souls, and their everlasting happiness, upon such cheap and easy terms? The folly is great, if we only consider what an unequal price they pay for so small a purchase: but it is much greater, if we regard the foolish order of their choice; first to please themselves with a shadow and appearance of happiness, and then to be really miserable afterward. If the happiness were true and real, it were an imprudent method. As if a man should chuse to enjoy a great estate for a few days, and to be extremely poor the remaining part of his life. If there were any necessity of making so unequal a bargain, surely a man would reserve the best condition to the last; for precedent sufferings and trouble do mightily recommend the pleasures that are to ensue, and render them more tasteful than they would otherwise have been; whereas the greatest heightening of misery, the saddest aggravation of an unhappy condition, is to fall into it from the height of a prosperous fortune. It is comfortable for a man to come out of the cold, to a warm fire; but if a man in a great heat shall leap into the cold water, it will strike him to the heart. Such is the fond choice of every sinner, to pass immediately out of a state of the greatest sensual pleasure, into the most quick and sensible torments. This our Saviour fully represents to us in the parable of *Lazarus* and the rich man, *Luke* 16. 25, where *Abraham* is brought in

in upbraiding the rich man for his foolish and preposterous choice, *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* This made a vast difference; the rich man received his good things first, and then was tormented: *Lazarus* first received his evil things, and then was comforted; and how comfortable was *Abraham's* bosom to him, after he had lain in so much misery and want at the rich man's gate? and on the other hand, how grievous must pain and torment be to that man, who never was acquainted with any thing but ease and pleasure?

But it may be all this is but a supposition; and there is no man so forsaken of his reason, and of common prudence, as to make such a bargain. Surely no man that is reasonable, no man that considers the difference between time and eternity, between a few years, and everlasting ages, can be persuaded to forego the happiness of Heaven, and to fall into the hands of the living God, no not if the whole world were offer'd to him for consideration. Indeed these large terms of *gaining the whole world*, are but a supposition, which our Saviour makes to shew the unreasonableness of most men's choice; but in truth, and in effect, the case of sinners is much worse. Among all these numerous troops of sinners that go to hell in such throngs, there is not one of them that ever made himself so wise a bargain; and tho' *the whole world* be but a pitiful price to be paid for a man's soul, yet so stupid are the greatest part of those creatures, whom we call reasonable, as to strike up a bargain for little scraps and portions of this world. There are but a few who stand upon such terms as this world thinks considerable. They are a sort of more generous sinners, that damn themselves for a crown and a kingdom, that will not do an act of injustice upon lower terms than a manor or a lordship. Alas! most men barter away their Souls for a trifle; and set their eternal happiness to sale for a thing of nought. How many are there, who, to gratify their covetousness, or lust, or revenge, or any other inordinate passion, are content to hazard the loss of their souls? who will go to hell rather than be out of the fashion; and damn themselves out of mere compliment to the company, and cannot be persuaded to leave off that foolish custom of swearing, which hath neither pleasure nor profit in it, no, not to save their souls?

Thus it is in truth, and the supposition which our Saviour here makes of *gaining the whole world*, is but a feigned case, the market was never yet so high, no sinner had ever yet so great a value for his immortal Soul, as to stand upon such terms; alas! infinitely less than *the whole world*, a little sordid gain, the gratifying of a vile lust, or an unmanly passion, the smile or the frown of a great man, the fear of singularity, and of displeasing the company; these, and such like mean and pitiful considerations, tempt thousands every day to make away with themselves, and to be undone for ever.

I have done with the first thing, the folly of this adventure, *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* I proceed to the

Second, The severe reflection men will make upon themselves for this their folly. What would they not give to undo this foolish bargain? *What will a man give in exchange for his soul?* to redeem and recover so great a loss? And sooner or later every man will be sensible of this folly; probably in this world, but most certainly in the other; and then, *What would a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Whenever the sinner comes to reflect upon himself, and to consider seriously what he hath done, with what indignation will he look upon himself, and censure his own folly? Like a man who in a drunken fit hath past away his estate for a trifling consideration; the next morning when he is sober and come to himself, and finds himself a beggar, how does he rate himself for being such a beast and a fool, as to do that in a blind and rash heat, which he will have cause to repent, as long as he hath a day to live?

Or if the sinner be able to keep off these thoughts, while he is well in health, yet when he is seized upon by sickness, and comes to lie upon a death-bed, he will then, in all probability, be sadly sensible what a fool he hath been. When he shall stand upon the confines of eternity, and look back upon this world; which how considerable soever it once appeared to him, can signify nothing now that he is to leave it; when he considers how much he hath parted with, and is now like to lose for ever,
for

for the false and treacherous advantages of a vain world, he will then need nobody to convince him of his error, to aggravate his folly to him; he now repents heartily that he was not wiser, and wisheth for nothing so much, as that God would grant him time to revoke and undo this foolish bargain; and how glad would he be to give the world back again to secure his soul, and to throw up all his unjust gain, and the advantages he hath indirectly made by fraud, or violence? This, I doubt not, is the sense of most men, when they come to leave the world: and if it is true then, it is so now. Let us then, while the opportunities of life are before us, suffer these considerations to take place and prevail, which otherwise would wound us to the heart, and fill our souls with anguish and despair in a dying hour.

O the folly and stupidity of men! to be so transported with present and sensible things, as to have no consideration of our future state, no pity for our Souls, no sense of our everlasting abode in another world; to be so blinded by sense, so bribed by *the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment*, as to forfeit the happiness of all eternity! when the pleasure is past and gone, and the dear price comes to be paid down, and our Souls are leaving this world, and going to take possession of that everlasting inheritance of shame and sorrow, of *tribulation and anguish*, which we have purchased to our selves by our own folly, how shall we then repent our selves of that bargain which we have so rashly made, but can never be released from!

It is our lot, who have the souls of men committed to our charge, to see many of these sad sights. O my God! what confusion have I sometimes seen in the face of a dying man? what terrors on every side, what restless working, and violent throws of a guilty conscience? and how are we tempted (who commonly are sent for too late to minister comfort to such persons) I say, how are we tempted to sow pillows under their uneasy heads, and out of very pity and compassion, are afraid to say the worst, and are grieved at our very hearts to speak those sad truths, which yet are fit for them to hear! It is very grievous to see a man in the paroxysms of a fever, or in the extreme torment of the stone, or in the very agony of death: but the saddest sight in the world is the anguish of a dying sinner: nothing looks so ghastly, as the final despair of a wicked man, when *God is taking away his soul*.

But whatever sense men have of these things, when they come to lie upon a sick bed; every sinner will most certainly be convinc'd, when he comes into another world. We shall then have nothing to divert us from these thoughts; we shall feel that which will be a sensible demonstration to us of our own folly. Then men will curse those false and flattering pleasures which have cheated them into so much misery; but their own folly most of all, for being so easily abused. Then would they give ten thousand worlds, if they had them, to recover the opportunity of a new choice; but it cannot be: they parted with their souls once at a cheap rate; but no price will then be accepted for the redemption of them.

O that men would consider these things in time, for they are plain and evident to those that will consider them. Our Saviour tells us, we have so much evidence, that he that will not be convinc'd by it, *would not be persuaded, tho' one rose from the dead to testify unto him*. We have *Moses and the prophets*; nay, we have *the Son of God himself*, who hath revealed these things to us; and if we would but attend to them, and suffer them to *sink into our hearts*, nothing in this world could be a temptation to any of us to do any thing, or to neglect any thing, to the prejudice of our immortal souls.

Therefore, to conclude this discourse, whenever by any present pleasure or advantage, we are tempted to provoke God, and to destroy our own souls; let us consider what an unequal bargain we make, how little we purchase, and how much we part withal. Whenever we are solicited to any sin, let us take time to answer the question here in the text, *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, &c.*

S E R M O N C X C V I .

The Reasonableness of fearing God more than Man.

L U K E xii. 4, 5.

And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

THE occasion of these words will more clearly appear, if we compare this discourse of our Saviour's, as it is here recorded by St. Luke, with that fuller account of it given by St. Matthew, chap. 10. where our Saviour having called his disciples together, and given them their commission, and the rules and instructions they were to observe in the execution of it, he warns them likewise of the opposition they would meet with, and the persecution that would attend them in the faithful discharge of their duty; nevertheless, he bids them take courage, and boldly to proclaim the gospel, notwithstanding all the danger and hazard it would expose them to; but because this is very unwelcome and terrible to flesh and blood, to encounter the rage and fury of men; therefore to strengthen their resolution, and to fortify their spirits against these fears, he tells them of something much more terrible than the wrath or rage of men, *viz.* the anger and displeasure of God, that so he might chase away this lesser fear by a greater, *I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid, &c.*

The words are sufficiently plain, and need no explication; only before I come to the main proposition which is contained in them, I shall take notice of these two important doctrines which are supposed in the text; the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body.

First, The immortality of the soul, which is a principle of natural religion, and not any where, that I know of, expressly asserted in Scripture; nor need it be so, being to be known by natural light, without divine revelation: but divine revelation did always suppose it, and take it for granted, as one of the foundations of religion. And I rather take notice of it here, because I do not know any text from which it may be more immediately inferred, than from these words of our Saviour, which necessarily imply these two things.

1. That the soul is not obnoxious to death, as the body is. *Fear not him that can kill the body, but after that hath no more that he can do;* which St. Matthew expresseth, *cannot kill the soul.*

2. That the soul remains after the death of the body. *Fear him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.*

Secondly, Another doctrine implied in these words, is that of the resurrection of the body; which is a doctrine of pure revelation, and most clearly and expressly revealed in the New Testament: and in some sort before to the Jews, who did generally believe it before our Saviour's coming, excepting the sect of the Sadducees. This is supposed in the fifth verse, *But fear him, who after he hath kill'd, hath power to cast into hell;* not only the soul, but also to raise up the body which is kill'd, and to torment it in hell; for so St. Matthew hath it expressly, *But fear him that can destroy both body and soul in hell.* Now the body, so long as it is dead, is devoid of sense, and so incapable of torment, till it be raised to life again. These being supposed, I come to the main observation contained in the words,

That God is infinitely more to be dreaded than men.

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The words indeed seem to reach farther, and to be an absolute prohibition of the fear of men; but it is an *Hebrew* phrase and manner of speaking, when two things are opposed, to express many times those things absolutely, which are to be understood comparatively; as *Jobn vi. 27, Labour not for the meat which perisheth; but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life*; that is, not so much for things temporal, as things eternal, incomparably more for the one than the other. So when our Saviour says, *Fear not them that can kill the body*, that is, fear not men so much as God, fear him infinitely more. It is very lawful for us to fear men, and to stand in awe of their power, because *they can kill the body*, and death is terrible; but when the power of man comes in competition with omnipotency, and what man can do to the body in this world, with what God can do to the body and soul in the other; there is no comparison between the terror of the one and the other.

The truth of this will appear, by comparing these two objects of fear together, God and man. Fear is a passion which is most deeply rooted in our nature, and flows immediately from that principle of self-preservation which is planted in every man's nature. We have a natural dread and horror for every thing that may hurt us, and endanger our being and happiness: now the greatest danger is always from the greatest power; so that to make good the truth of this observation, we need do no more than compare the power of men and God, and the effects of both, and then to calculate the difference; and if there appear to be a vast and infinite difference between them, it will be evident that God is infinitely more to be dreaded than men.

First, We will consider the power of man, and what it is he can do; or rather his impotency, or what he cannot do.

Secondly, How much the power of God exceeds the power of men, and what he can do more.

First, We will consider the power of man, and what it is he can do: which our Saviour expresseth in these words, *Be not afraid of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do*. Which signifies in general, that the power of man is finite and limited, and circumscribed within certain bounds, beyond which it cannot go; something it can do, but not much; it can hurt the body, yea and take away our life; *it can kill the body*, hither it can go, and no farther.

More particularly in these words you have man's power, what he can do; and his impotency, what he can but do, the limits and bounds of his power.

I. The power of men, and what they can do, they can *kill the body*, and take away our lives; which includes a power of doing whatever is less. All those evils and persecutions which fall short of death, these they can inflict upon us, they can *revile us, and speak all manner of evil against us*; they can *persecute us from one city to another*, and *bring us before councils*, and *scourge us in their synagogues*; they can *spoil us of our goods*, and *deprive us of our liberty*; they can exercise us with *bonds and imprisonments*, with *cruel mockings and scourgings*, with *hunger and thirst*, with *cold and nakedness*; they can many ways afflict and torment us, and at last they can put us to death; all this they can do by the permission of God; here is the sum of their power; give them all advantages, let them be united and combined together. Our Saviour puts it in the plural number, *Fear not them*; and let them be back'd with human authority, which our Saviour supposeth, when he speaks of *bringing his disciples before kings and governors*. Thus much their powers amount to.

II. We will consider the impotency of men, which will appear in these two particulars.

1. That they cannot do this without the divine permission.

2. That if they be permitted to do their worst, they can but do this; *after that they have no more that they can do*.

1. They cannot do this without the divine permission. The Devil, tho' he hath a greater natural power than men, yet he could not touch *Job*, either in his substance or his body, without God's leave and permission. Men are apt to arrogate to themselves a great deal of power, forgetting whence they derive it, and on whom it depends.

pend. *Knowest thou not that I have the power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?* said Pilate to our Saviour: but he tells him, *Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above,* John xix. 10, 11. All the power that men have, they have it from God, and he can check and countermand it when he pleaseth; he can *restrain the rage of men, and put a hook in their nostrils*; he can *still the noise of the sea, and the tumult of the people.*

God's providence is continually vigilant over us, and unless it seem good to the divine wisdom to permit men, they cannot touch or hurt us. It is added immediately after the text, that the providence of God extends to creatures much less considerable than we are, and to the most inconsiderable things that belong to us: *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and yet not one of them is forgotten before God, or falls to the ground without the will of our Father; yea, the very hairs of our heads, are they not all number'd?* Much more is the providence of God concerned in our lives, and the more considerable accidents and events which befall us; we are always under God's eye and care, and no man can do us the least hurt without his permission.

2. If men be permitted to do their worst, they can do but this; *they can but kill the body, after that they have no more that they can do.* Now this implies several limitations of men's power, and abatements of the terror of it.

1. *They can but kill the body*, that is, they can only injure the worst and least considerable part of us. The power of the devil reacheth no farther than this, this was the worst mischief his malice could devise to do to *Job*, to *touch his bone and his flesh*, and to take away his life; and all that the fury and rage of man can do, is to wound these vile bodies, and to spurn down these *houses of clay*, whose foundations are already in the dust. But the man's soul, which is himself, that they cannot touch; though they may pierce and break the cabinet, yet they cannot seize the jewel that is in it, and get that into their power and possession; when they have broken open this cage, *our soul will escape like a bird to his mountain.* Men may invent several instruments to torture and afflict the body; but no weapon can be formed against the soul, that can touch it, or do it harm.

2. When they have kill'd the body, by doing this, they do but prevent nature a little, they do but antedate an evil a few moments, and bring our fears upon us a little sooner; they kill that which must die within a few days, though they should let it alone; they do but cut asunder that thread which would shortly break of itself, by its own weakness and rottenness; so that as the lepers reasoned, when the famine was in *Samaria*, 2 Kings vii. 3, 4. *Why sit we here untill we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also.* Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians, if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die; so we may reason in this case, Why should we so much desire to sit still 'till we die? if men persecute us, and do their worst, we shall die; and if they do not, however we shall die; therefore let not the fear of any danger from men make us forget our duty to God, *for if they kill us, we shall but die.*

3. *They can but kill the body*; and what argument of power is this, to be able to kill that which is mortal? as if you should say, they can break a glass, they can throw down that which is falling. This is no such wonderful effect of power, to be able to do that, which almost every thing can do, which the least thing in the world, which the poorest creature can do; a pin, or a thorn, or a grape-stone; there is hardly any thing in the whole creation so inconsiderable, but it can do this which men are apt to boast of as so great an evidence of their power. We are frail creatures, and 'tis no mere melancholy conceit that we are made of glass, and as we pass through the world we are liable to be broken in pieces by the juggle of a thousand accidents; every thing can lie in wait for us, and lurk privily for our lives. Men think it such an act of power to kill a man; whereas nothing is so easy. A man may be killed by another's kindness, as soon as by thy hatred; by his own excessive love, or joy, or hope, as well as by thy malice; so that it is no such instance and argument of power, *to be able to kill the body.*

4. The killing of the body does not necessarily signify any great mischief or harm in the issue and event. *They can kill the body*, that is, they can knock off our fetters, and open the prison doors, and set us at liberty; they can put us out of

pain, thrust us out of an uneasy world, put an end to our sins and sorrows, to our misery and fears; they can *give the weary rest*, and send us thither where we would be, but are loth to venture to go; they can hasten our happiness, and make way for the more speedy accomplishment of our desires, and dispatch us to heaven sooner than otherwise we should get thither; they can kill us in the cause of God, and in the discharge of our duty; that is, they can add to our happiness, and brighten our crown, and increase the weight of our glory.

5. *They can but kill the body*, when they have done that, they may give over, *here their proud waves must stop*; here their cruelty and malice, their power and wit must terminate, for they can reach no farther. When they have done all they can, they cannot annihilate us, they cannot make an utter end of us. As for the soul, they cannot come at *that* to do it any harm; neither the axe, nor the sword, nor the spear, nor the nail, nor any other instrument, can wound or pierce it: and as for the body, though they wound it, and bruise it, and mangle it, yet they cannot turn it into nothing; though they may banish life from it, and make it a vile and loathsome carcass, yet they cannot command it out of being, it will still maintain itself under one form or other, and after it is kill'd, defy any thing more that can be done to it.

6. *They can but kill the body*, they cannot do the least harm to the soul, much less can they annihilate it, and make it cease to be; they cannot torment it, they cannot with all their instruments of cruelty reach and touch the spirit of a man; they cannot throw stings into the consciences and fill our minds with anguish and horror; nor can they make us torment ourselves by the racking of our own thoughts; they cannot create guilt in our minds, nor animate against us that never dying worm, nor cast despairing thoughts, nor cause self-condemning and furious reflections in our own minds; nothing of all this are they able to do.

7. And *lastly, They can but kill the body*, that is, they can but inflict temporal misery upon us; their power, as it is but small, so it is of a short continuance, it reacheth no farther than this life, it is confined to this world; so that what mischief men would do us, they must do it quickly, *while we are in the way*. There is no plot, nor device, nor cruelty, can be practised upon us *in the grave whither we are going*. They cannot slay the dead, nor can their malice overtake those that are gone down into the pit; the longest arm, and the most inveterate hatred, cannot reach those that are got out of the land of the living. Our most powerful and deadly enemies cannot follow us beyond the grave, and pursue us into the other world. Thus *Job* elegantly describes the happy state of the dead, that they are out of the reach of all evil and disquiet, *Job* iii. 17, 18, 19. speaking of the grave, *There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master*. Thus you see what the power of man is, and what the effects of it, what is the worst that he can do to us; and consequently how much he is to be feared and regarded. I proceed to the

Second thing I propounded to speak to, namely, how much the power of God exceeds the power of man; which our Saviour declares in these words, *Who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell*.

Which in general signifies, that his power is infinite and unlimited. God cannot only do what man can do, but infinitely more; his power is not confined to the body, but he hath power over the spirit; he cannot only make body and soul miserable in this world; but in the other; not only for a time, but to all eternity.

More particularly in these words you have imply'd all those advantages which the power of God hath above the power of man. Not to insist upon that, which yet the text takes notice of, that God can do all that man can do; *he can kill the body*, which is imply'd in these words, *after he hath killed*. He can blast our reputation, and ruin our estate, and afflict our bodies with the sharpest pains, and smite us with death. And God doth all that with ease, which men many times do with great labour and endeavour; they are glad to use the utmost of their wit and power, and contrivance, to do us mischief; but God can do all things by a word: if he do but speak, judgments come: we are but a little dust, and the least breath of God can dissipate us: he hath all creatures at his command, ready to execute his will. So that whatever man, or any creature can do, that God can: and infinitely more; and

and this is that which I shall briefly open to you, wherein the power of God doth exceed the power of man, in these following particulars.

1. God's power is absolute, and independent upon any other; not subject to be at any time check'd and controul'd by a superior power, because there is none greater, none above it. *There is a bigger than the biggest* upon earth, and one that may say to the greatest and proudest of all the Sons of men, *What dost thou?* God can forbid any man to execute his purpose, when he is most firmly resolved and determined; but when he hath a mind to manifest his power, he needeth not ask any man's leave. *Fear him that hath power*, *ἡγεμονία* *ἔχοντα* *that hath authority*; he hath an independent power, and a sovereign right over the lives of men, because they are all his creatures, and when he will put forth his power, there is none can resist or challenge him. God did once force this acknowledgement from one of the greatest and proudest kings of the earth, *Nebuchadnezzar*, Dan. iv. 35. *He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can say unto him, what dost thou?*

2. His power reacheth to the soul as well as the body. He can annihilate soul and body. He that brought all things into being by his word, can with as much ease make them vanish into nothing: as *he spake the word, and they were made*: so he can command, and they shall not be. By the least breath of his mouth he can turn us into nothing; nay, upon the very withdrawing of those influences of his power and goodness, whereby we are maintained and supported in being, our bodies would vanish and *flee away like a shadow*, and *our spirits also would fail before him, and the souls which he hath made*.

And as he can annihilate the souls of men, if he please, so he can torment them. He that made our souls, and can make them happy, can likewise make them miserable; for he is a Spirit, and hath power over ours; he can *shoot his arrows* into them, and make them *stick fast* there; he can wound our souls with invisible darts, and fill our spirits with secret anguish and amazement. When he sends a sword without to destroy our bodies, he can send terrors within to torment our minds; he can *distract us with terrors*, as *David* speaks, *Psal. lxxxviii. 15*. nay, he can make us a terror to ourselves, and by letting loose our thoughts upon us, can make us more miserable, than all the tyrants of the world can do, by the most exquisite torments; and that in this life, as we see in the instance of *Francis Spira*. When *the Father of spirits* will take us under correction, he can chastise us to purpose, and make our own guilty consciences to sting and lash us, and our minds to torture themselves by furious reflections upon themselves. All this God can do in this life.

3. In the other world he can raise our bodies again, and reunite them to our souls, and cast them into hell, and torment them there. This is that which *St. Matthew* calls *destroying body and soul in hell*. And what the misery of that state shall be, the scripture in the general gives us an account, describing it to us by the greatest anguish and the most sharp and sensible bodily torments, by *the worm that dies not*, that is, that guilt which shall eternally gnaw the consciences of sinners; and by *the fire which is not quenched*, that is, the everlasting pains of the body.

In the other world God will raise the bodies of wicked men, and re-unite them to their souls, and cast them together into hell, to be tormented there; and this is that which is called *the second death*. And as tortured persons, when they are taken off the rack, have their joints new set, to be new rack'd again; so the bodies of wicked men shall be raised to a new life, that they may be capable of new pains.

This state of miserable men is set forth to us by the most sharp pains and sensible torments; by the pain of burning, *Matth. xxv. 41*. *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire*. The rich man in the parable cried out, that he was *tormented in flames*; and in the *Revelation*, the wicked are said *to be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone*. Fire is the most active thing in nature, and brimstone the most combustible, to shew how quick and sharp the torment of sinners shall be; and it shall be universal, they shall be *cast into the lake*, their torments shall be sharp as that of burning, and as universal as if they were drowned in flames. And to shew how great a sense they shall have of these sufferings, the Scripture describes those who are condemned to these hideous pains, lamenting and wringing their hands, and *gnashing their teeth*

for very anguish: *Matthew xxiv. 51. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.* Thus the Scripture represents to us the dismal state of the damned, possibly after this sensible manner, that it may accommodate things to our capacity: but to be sure if these be not the very torments of hell, they shall be every whit as dreadful, as great as the terrors of God's wrath, which ill men have laid up in store for themselves, can afford; and very probably they are of that nature, and so great as not to be capable of being fully described by any thing that we are now acquainted withal: for *Who knows the power of God's anger?* Who can imagine the worst that omnipotent justice can do to sinners? As the glory of heaven, and joys of God's presence are now inexplicable to us, so likewise are the torments of hell and the miseries of the damned. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of men,* those dreadful things which God hath laid up for them that hate him.

4. Which is the most dreadful consideration of all, God can punish for ever. The wrath of man is but a blast, a storm that is soon over: all misery and torments that men can inflict, expire with this life; but the miserable effects of the divine displeasure extend themselves to all eternity. For this reason the judgment of God is called *an eternal judgment*, *Heb. vi. 2.* because the sentence which shall then be passed upon men, shall assign them to an eternal state; and the punishment that in pursuance of this sentence shall be inflicted upon sinners, is called *an everlasting punishment*, *Matt. xxv. 46.* And the instruments of their torment are said to be *everlasting*, *Matt. xxv. 41.* it is called *everlasting fire*. And *Mark ix. 44, 46, 48.* you have it there three times repeated, *Where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. The smoke of the bottomless pit is said to ascend for ever and ever, Rev. xiv. 11. and Rev. xx. 10.* it is said, that *the wicked shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever*, without intermission and without end.

It must needs be then, as the apostle says, *Heb. x. 31. a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, that is, the God that lives for ever, because he that lives for ever, can punish for ever. And this is that which makes the great difference between the effects of the wrath of man, and the displeasure of God; the wrath of man, and the effects of it, are but for a moment; but the effects of God's displeasure extend themselves to all eternity.

By these particulars, which I have briefly gone over, you may see, who is the great object of our fear; and when you have calculated the difference between God and man, you will find that there is no proportion between the impotency of man, and the omnipotency of God; between those evils that men can inflict upon us, and the terrors of the Lord; and consequently what great reason we have to be afraid of offending God, and transgressing our duty in any kind, to avoid any temporal danger and inconvenience. But I shall not now enter upon the application of this serious and weighty argument.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N CXCVII.

The Reasonableness of fearing God more than Man.

L U K E xii. 4, 5.

And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

I Proceed now to apply this serious and weighty argument, and to draw some useful inferences from it, The Second Sermon on this Text,

I. That religion doth not design to annihilate and to root out our passions, but regulate and govern them; it does not wholly forbid and condemn them, but determines them to their proper objects, and appoints them their measures and proportions; it does not intend to extirpate our affections, but to exercise and employ them aright, and to keep them within bounds. Religion does not aim to extirpate our love, and joy, and hope, and fear; but to purify and direct them, telling us how we should love God with the highest and most intense degree of affection, as the supreme Good deserves, *with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our minds, and with all our strength*; and other things only in subordination to him. Religion refines our joy and delight from the dregs of sensual pleasure, raising them to better objects, requiring us *to rejoice in the Lord evermore, and to rejoice that our names are written in heaven*: it raiseth our hopes above the favour of men, and tells us whom we should fear above all, the great and terrible God, whose power is infinitely above the power of men. Now that which propounds objects to our passions, and sets bounds to them, did never intend the utter extirpation of them; but this religion doth.

II. We may infer likewise from hence, that it is not against the genius of true religion, to urge men with arguments of fear. No man can imagine there would have been so many fearful threatenings in scripture, and especially in the gospel, if it had not been intended they should have some effect and influence upon us. Some look upon all arguments of fear as *legal, and gendering to bondage*, as contrary to the genuine spirit and temper of the gospel; and look upon preachers, who urge men with considerations taken from the justice of God, and *the terrors of the Lord*, as of an unevangelical spirit, as the *children of the bondwoman, and not of the free*; as those who would bring men back again to *mount Sinai, to thunder and lightening, to blackness, and darkness, and tempest*. But will such men allow our Saviour and his apostles to have been evangelical preachers? If so, it is not contrary to the gospel to use arguments of terror; they thought them very proper to deter men from sin, and to bring them to repentance, *Acts xvii, 30, 31. But now commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness*. And the same apostle tells us, that one principal thing which made the gospel so powerful for the salvation of men, was the terrible threatenings of it, because *therein the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. i. 18*. And 2 Cor. v. 10. the apostle puts Christians in mind of the judgment of Christ, *We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ*. And lest any should doubt whether this were a proper argument to work upon Christians under the gospel, he tells us, that he mentioned it for this very purpose, *ver. 11. Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men*.

Some

Some are so tender, that they cannot bear any other arguments but such as are taken from the free grace of God, and the free love of Christ. If we mention to them the wrath of God, and the torments of hell, we grate upon them; but if we consider the primitive preaching of Christ and his apostles, and will be concluded by their pattern, we must allow the necessity and usefulness of these arguments.

And indeed, if we consider the nature and reason of things, nothing is more apt to work upon sinners, than arguments of fear. Hence it is that the wisdom of mankind hath thought fit to secure the observance of human laws by the fear of punishment. Fear is deeply rooted in our nature, and immediately flows from that principle of self-preservation which is planted in every man; 'tis the most wakeful passion in the soul of man, and so soon as any thing that is dreadful and terrible is presented to us, it alarms us to flee from it: and this passion doth naturally spring up in our minds from the apprehension of a Deity, because the notion of a God doth include in it power and justice, both which are terrible to guilty creatures; so that fear is intimate to our being, and God hath hid in every man's conscience a secret awe and dread of his presence, of his infinite power and eternal justice.

Now fear being one of the first things that is imprinted upon us from the apprehension of a Deity, it is that passion, which above all other gives the greatest advantage to religion, and is the easiest to be wrought upon. Hence the wise man does so often call *the fear of the Lord, the beginning of wisdom*, because here usually religion begins, and first takes hold of this passion, *Prov. xvi. 6. By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil*. Fear is a good sure principle, and one of the best guards and securities against sin: other passions are fickle and inconstant, but we cannot shake off our fears, nor quit ourselves of them, so long as we believe the reality of the object; there will be fear and terror in a guilty conscience, so long as it believes a holy, just and omnipotent God, and that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*.

Other passions are more under the government of reason, as our love, and hope, and anger: but fear is the most natural, and most deeply rooted in the sensitive nature, and therefore is common to us with all other creatures, who have any considerable degree of sense, or any other passion: and we may observe those creatures, who scarce betray any other passion, to be fearful of danger, and to flee from it. Now fear having less to do with reason, the effects of it are less to be hinder'd. All the reason in the world cannot command down our fears, unless the danger be removed, or some probable way shewn of avoiding or mastering it; and therefore arguments of fear are great eloquence, and have a mighty force and power of persuasion. *Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, saith St. Paul, we persuade men*. One of the best sort of arguments to fright men from sin, and to bring them to their duty, are *the terrors of the Lord*. These take the fastest and surest hold of men, even of the most obstinate and obdurate sinners; for arguments of love and kindness will work but little upon such persons; some ingenuity is required to be swayed by such considerations; but the perversest creatures love themselves, and may be wrought upon by arguments of fear: so that it is agreeable both to the nature of man and of religion, to propound such arguments to our consideration.

III. The fear of God is the best antidote against the fear of men. We are very apt to be awed by men, and to start from our duty for fear of temporal evils and sufferings. This fear seized upon St. Peter, and made him deny his master. And where the fear of men does not prevail so far, yet it will many times make men shy and timorous in the owning of religion in the times of danger. This made Nicodemus to come to our Saviour *by night*. *John iii. 2.* So likewise *many of the rulers who believed in Christ, durst not make open confession of him, lest they should have been put out of the synagogue*, *John xii. 42.* Some men that have good inclinations to the truth, and are inwardly convinced of it, yet in times of danger they love to be wise and cautious: they have an eye to a retreat, and are loth to venture too far. But if we give way to these fears, and suffer them to possess us, we shall be exposed to many temptations, and be liable to be seduced from our duty. So Solomon observes, *Prov. xxix. 25. The fear of man bringeth a snare*.

Now if we would cast out this fear of men, it must be by a greater fear, which is stronger and more powerful; and that is the fear of God, *Isa. viii. 12, 13. Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid*; speaking of the fear of men, against which

he prescribes this remedy, *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.* If God be once the object of our fear, and we be thoroughly possessed with awful apprehensions of him, the frowns of men, and the wrath and displeasure of the greatest upon earth, will signify nothing to us. This preserved *Moses* amidst all the temptations of a court, *Heb. xi. 27. He feared not the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.* He could easily bear the anger of *Pharaoh*, when by faith he beheld the omnipotent justice of the King immortal and invisible.

IV. If God be infinitely more to be dreaded than men, then *who is to be obeyed, God or men? judge ye.* I speak not this to diminish our reverence to magistrates, and their authority; for by persuading men to fear God, who commands obedience to magistrates, we secure their reverence and authority: but when the commands of men are contrary to God's, and come in competition with them, shall we not hearken to him who is supreme, the greatest and most powerful? shall we not obey him who hath the most questionable authority over us, and right to command us? Shall we not dread him most, who is to be feared above all; who can be the best friend, and the worst enemy, is able to give the greatest rewards to our obedience, and to revenge himself upon us for our disobedience, by the most dreadful and severe punishments? The great *Socrates*, when he was accused by the *Athenians* for corrupting and seducing the youth of *Athens* by his philosophy, makes this generous defence for himself, more like an apostle than a philosopher, "That he believed this province was committed to him by God, that he was called by him to this employment, to endeavour to reform the world; and therefore for him to forsake his station for fear of death, or of any other temporal evil, would be a most grievous sin." And afterwards (as *Plato* gives us the account of it) he says, *I am not afraid to die: but this I am afraid of, to disobey the commands of my superior, and to desert the station he hath placed me in, and to give over the work which he hath appointed me; and therefore, says he, If you would dismiss me upon these conditions, that I would forbear for the future to instruct the people, and if after this I be found so doing, I should be put to death; if I might be released upon these terms, I would not accept them; I would thank you for your good will, but this I must affirm to you, that I ought to obey God rather than you; and so long as I have breath, I will never give over exhorting and teaching the people, and inculcating the precepts of philosophy upon every one I meet with.*

Could a Heathen, who had but very obscure apprehensions of the rewards of another life, in comparison of what Christians have by the revelation of the gospel; could he take up this brave resolution, and die in it? Did he with so much constancy despise the wrath and reproaches of men, and with so much cheerfulness entertain death, rather than to flinch from his duty? How does this upbraid the cowardice of many Christians, who are so easily deterred from their duty, and are apt to quit their religion for fear of sufferings? Since *life and immortality is brought to light by the gospel*, and *the wrath of God is so clearly revealed from heaven.* What a folly is it for any man to *chuse iniquity rather than affliction*, as the expression is in *Job*; and to forfeit the favour of God, for the friendship of the world?

The fear of men will not be a sufficient plea and excuse for men at the day of judgment; it will not then be enough to say, *This I was awed into by the apprehension of such a danger, by the fear of such sufferings; to avoid such an inconvenience, I knowingly committed such a sin; for fear of being persecuted, I violated my conscience, and chose rather to trust God with my soul, than men with my estate; to save my life, I renounced my religion, was ashamed of Christ, and denied him before men.* Our Saviour hath told us plainly, that this will not serve us at the great day, *Mark viii. 38. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his father with his holy angels.* And *Rev. xxi. 8.* in that catalogue of sinners which shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, the fearful and unbelievers are particularly mentioned.

And indeed, they who out of fear of men offend God, are guilty of this unreasonable folly, they incur the danger of a greater evil, to avoid a less, and to save their estates or their lives, they plunge themselves into hell; whilst they are endeavouring to escape the hands of men that shall die, they fall into the hands of the living God.

Lastly,

Lastly, If God be the great object of our fear, let all impenitent sinners represent to themselves *the terrors of the Lord*, and *the power of his anger*. This consideration, if any thing in the world will do it, will awaken them to a sense of the danger of their condition, and of the fatal issue of a wicked life. Were but men possessed with due apprehensions of the power of God; the fear of men, and what they can do to us, would have no influence upon us in comparison of the fears of divine vengeance. Were we sensible what it is to displease God, *in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways*, who can make us as miserable, as we are capable of being, and more miserable than we can now imagine, not only in our bodies, but in our souls, not only in this world, but in the other, not only for a time, but without end; would not this make us afraid to offend and displease him?

Can any consideration be more powerful to restrain us from sin, and to argue us to repentance and obedience, than this? We may oppose the eternal displeasure of God, not only to all *the pleasures of sin*, but to all *the terrors of sense*, which are but *for a moment*. When men would allure us to sin by the baits and temptations of pleasure, or discourage and deter us from our duty by the threatnings of danger and sufferings; let us oppose to these the anger of the great God, and the infinite treasures of his wrath; and the serious thoughts of this will blunt the edge of all temptations, and quench all motives and incentives to sin.

Do we fear the wrath of man, whose power is short, *and whose breath is in his nostrils*, who can but afflict a little, and for a little while; and is not the wrath of the eternal God much more dreadful? Is not *destruction from the Lord, a terror to thee*? Dost thou fear man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be made as grass; and dost thou stand in no awe of him who lives for ever? Is the fear of men so prevalent upon us, and shall not *the terrors of the Lord* have a much greater effect upon us? God is the supreme, and indeed the only object of our fear, in comparison of whom nothing else is to be dreaded, *Psal. lxxvi. 7. Thou, even thou art to be feared, and who may stand in thy sight, when once thou art angry?* And *Psal. xc. 11. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? As is thy fear, so is thy wrath.* No passion in the soul of man is more infinite and unbounded than our fear; it is apt to fill our minds with endless jealousies and suspicions of what may befall us, of the worst that may happen: but if we should extend our fears to the utmost of what our wild and affrighted imaginations can reach to, they could not exceed the greatness of God's wrath: *As is thy fear, so is thy wrath.*

Let us then consider things impartially, and fear him most who hath the greatest power, and consequently whom of all other persons in the world it is most dangerous to offend. Let us set before us God and men; the single death of the body, and the sorest and most sensible torments of body and soul together; temporal afflictions and sufferings, and eternal pains and sorrows: and when we are apt to fear what men can do unto us, let us consider how much more he can do, to whom power belongs, if for fear of men we will venture to provoke him. When men threaten us with a prison, let us think of *the chains of darkness*: when they would terrify us with fire and faggot; let us think of *the lake which burns with fire and brimstone*: when we are threaten'd with banishment; let us consider how great a misery it will be to be banished from the glorious and blissful presence of God for ever: when the danger of a temporal death is presented to us; let us remember the *worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched*.

Ye that are so bold as to offend God, and affront the Almighty to his face, by profane blasphemies, and impudent impiety, consider what ye do, how great a danger you run upon, to what fearful misery you expose yourselves, whenever you thus offend him; think of that question of the apostle, and answer it if you can; *Will ye provoke the Lord to jealousy? are ye stronger than he?* Take warning on this side hell, while ye may escape it; *flee from the wrath which is to come*, while it is yet to come, before it overtake you, and there be no escaping.

And let it not be grievous to us, to be put in mind of those terrible things. How much easier is it now to hear of them, while they may be avoided, than to endure them hereafter, when they will be both unavoidable and intolerable? And look upon them as the best and most faithful friends, who deal plainly with you in these matters, and acquaint you with the true state of things, and tell you nothing but what you will certainly find true, if you persist in this dangerous course of offend-

ing

ing God ; who represent things to you as they are, and forewarn you of so great and certain a danger.

It is no pleasure to any man to speak of such dreadful and tragical things ; it can be no delight to fright men, and to grate upon their ears with such harsh and unwelcome words : but it is necessary to the greatest part of sinners, to set their danger before them in the most terrible and frightful manner ; and all this little enough to awake the greatest part of mankind to due consideration of their ways. Soft words, and sober reason, and calm arguing will work upon some persons ; some sinners are more yielding, and may be taken in upon parley ; but others are so obstinate and resolved, that they are not to be carried but by storm ; and in this case, violence is the greatest act of friendship and kindness. Our Saviour, when he spake these terrible words to his disciples, and gave them this warning, does insinuate, that it proceeded from a most sincere and hearty friendship to them : *And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do ; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear, &c.*

S E R M O N CXCVIII.

The Efficacy of Prayer, for obtaining the Holy Spirit.

L U K E xi. 13

How much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him.

TH E great advantages which we have by the Christian religion, are these The First Sermon on this Text.

1. A more perfect rule for the direction of our lives.
2. A more powerful assistance to enable us to the performance of our duty. And,
3. The assurance of a glorious and an eternal reward.

And all these are contained in that excellent sermon of our blessed Saviour upon the mount : of which this passage in St. Luke is a part, altho' it was spoken here by our Saviour upon another occasion, and at another time.

Our Saviour begins that sermon with the last of these, as being the great motive and encouragement to our duty, the promise of blessedness, and of a great reward in heaven.

And then he lays down the rule which was the substance of those moral duties, which are contained in the law and the prophets ; only he explains and supplies whatever was obscure and defective before, and thereby brings our duty to a greater certainty, and clearness, and perfection than it had before.

But because this would have signified little to us, if we be still unable to perform our duty, and to obey that law which God hath given us, and to the obedience whereof he hath promised so great a reward ; therefore that nothing might be wanting to excite and encourage our obedience, our blessed Saviour, after he had made our duty as strict as possible, lest we should faint and be discouraged under an apprehension of the impossibility, or extreme difficulty of performing what he requires of us, is pleased to promise an assistance equal to the difficulty of our duty, and our inability of our selves to perform it ; knowing that we are without strength, and that nothing is a greater discouragement to men from attempting any thing, than

an apprehension that they have not sufficient strength to go thro' with it, not being able of themselves alone to do it, and despairing of assistance from any other.

And this is the great discouragement that most men lie under, as to the business of religion; they are conscious to themselves of their own weakness, and not sufficiently persuaded of the divine assistance; like the lame man in the gospel, that lay at the pool of *Bethesda* to be healed; he was not able to go in himself, and none took that pity on him as to help him in.

Hence it comes to pass, that a great many are dishearten'd from engaging in the ways of religion; because some spies, those who have only taken a superficial view of religion, have brought up an evil report upon that good land, which they pretend to have searched, saying, as they of old did, when they returned from searching the land of *Canaan*, *Numb. xiii. 31, 32, 33. We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we: And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched, unto the children of Israel, saying, The land thro' which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof, and all the people that we saw in it, are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight, as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.* Just thus we are apt to misrepresent religion to ourselves, as if the difficulties of it were insupportable, and the enemies which we are to encounter were infinitely too strong for us; not considering that *the Lord is with us*, and notwithstanding our own impotency and weakness, yet by his strength, we may be (as *St. Paul* expresseth it) *more than conquerors*.

Therefore to remove this discouragement, and to put life into the endeavours of men, our blessed Saviour assures us, that God is ready to assist us, and to supply our weakness and want of strength by a power from above, even by giving us his holy Spirit, which is *a spirit of might, and of power, and of the fear of the Lord*, as he is called by the prophet; and he is ready to bestow so great a gift upon us on the easiest terms and conditions imaginable; if we will but *ask* this blessing of him, *How much more shall your heavenly father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

How much more? which words are an argument from the less to the greater, by which our Saviour, from the confidence which children naturally have in the goodness of their earthly parents, that they will not deny them things necessary and convenient for them, if they earnestly beg them at their hands, argues Christians into a great confidence of the good will of their heavenly father, and of his readiness to give his holy Spirit to them that ask him.

The force of which argument depends upon a double comparison, of the quality of the persons giving, and of the nature of the gift.

1. The quality of the persons giving. *Fathers upon earth*, and our *heavenly Father*. If *earthly fathers* be naturally disposed to give good things to their children, how much more may we believe this of our *heavenly Father*? if they who are but *Men* have so much goodness; how much more confidently may we presume it of *God*, who excels in all perfections, and whose goodness excels all his other perfections? If they who are *evil*, that is, many times envious, and ill-natur'd, and at the best, but imperfectly good; how much more *God*, who is *infinitely good*, and even *goodness* itself? If they who are many times *indigent*, or but meanly provided of the good things they bestow, and if they give them to their children, must want them themselves; how much more *God*, who is not the less *rich* and *full* for the overflowings of his bounty, and can never impair his estate, nor impoverish himself by conferring of his blessings and benefits upon others?

2. If we compare the nature of the gifts. If earthly parents that are evil, be ready to bestow *good things* upon their children, things necessary and convenient only for their bodies and this life; how much more confidently may we believe the good *God* inclined to bestow upon his children *the best things*, things necessary for their souls, and conducing to their eternal life and happiness?

So that in the handling of these words, I shall

First, Endeavour to shew what is comprehended in this gift of the Holy Spirit, and how great a blessing and benefit it is.

Secondly, What kind of asking is here required,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, To confirm and illustrate the truth of this proposition, that God is very ready to give the holy Spirit to them that ask him.

Fourthly, To remove a considerable objection to which this discourse may seem liable. And,

Fifthly, To make some practical application of it to ourselves.

First, I shall shew what is comprehended in this gift of the Holy Spirit, and how great a blessing and benefit it is. St. *Matthew* expresseth this somewhat differently, chap. vii. ver. 11. *How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?* Which compared with the expression here in St. *Luke*, doth intimate to us, that the Spirit of God is the chief of blessings, or rather the sum of all good things. The promise here in the text is not exprest so generally as it is in St. *Matthew*; but our evangelist instanceth in the greatest gift that God can bestow upon his children; the gift of his holy Spirit, which is indeed the chief of all other, the sum and comprehension of all spiritual blessings; for it contains in it the presence and residence, the continual influence and assistance of God's holy Spirit upon the minds of men, together with all the blessed fruits and effects of it, in the sanctifying and renewing of our hearts in all those particular graces and virtues, which are in scripture called *the fruits of the spirit*; in *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, in *sealing us up to the day of redemption*, and in being a pledge of our future inheritance, and of a blessed resurrection to eternal life. All these are mentioned in scripture, as the fruits and effects of God's holy Spirit, and therefore it will come within the compass of this promise concerning the gift of God's Spirit; *How much more shall your heavenly Father, &c.*

And which I desire may be especially consider'd, because it will conduce very much to the clearing of some difficulties in my following discourse. By the gift of God's Holy Spirit, is not only meant the common and transient operations of God's Spirit upon the minds of men, exciting and disposing them to that which is good; (for thus the Spirit was given to men in all ages from the beginning of the world) but the special presence and residence, the permanent and continued influence and conduct of God's Holy Spirit, as a constant and powerful principle of spiritual life and activity in good men; in which sense the Scripture tells us, that the Holy Ghost *resides and dwells* in believers, that they *live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit*: for this phrase of *the giving of the Holy Ghost*, or of *God's Spirit*, does always (I think) in the New Testament signify either the miraculous and extraordinary gifts conferred upon the apostles and primitive christians, in order to the effectual planting and propagating of the gospel; and so it is used, *Acts* v. 32. where St. *Peter* says, that *the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him, was a witness of the resurrection and ascension of our Saviour*, that is, gave testimony and confirmation thereto: or else for the special residence, and continual influence and assistance of God's Holy Spirit in and upon the minds of good men. And so we find this phrase frequently used, *Rom.* v. 5. *The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*; meaning for the strengthening and assistance of believers to all patience and long-suffering under the persecutions which attended them; for so the apostle reasons, *We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*; that is, for our support and assistance under sufferings. So likewise, *1 Thess.* iv. 8. where defiling of our bodies by lust, is called *a despising of God, who hath given unto us his Holy Spirit*; that is, *to dwell in us*: for which reason the same apostle calls our bodies *the temples of the Holy Ghost, and of God*, *1 Cor.* iii. 16. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.* And, chap. vi. ver. 19. *Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?*

And *1 John*, iii. 24. God is said to give us his Spirit to enable us to keep his commandments; *He that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* And chap. iv. ver. 13. *Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* So that the gift of God's Spirit doth imply his

continual residence in good men; and his powerful assistance of them to all the purposes of holiness and obedience; and not only a transient operation upon the minds of men, by some good motions and suggestions, which is common to bad men, and those who are in a sinful and unregenerate state.

Secondly, We shall in the next place consider, what kind of asking, in order to the obtaining of this great blessing, is here required by our Saviour, when he says, *God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him*. It must have these *three* qualifications.

1. It must be hearty and sincere, in opposition to formal and hypocritical asking.

2. It must be earnest, and fervent, and importunate, in opposition to cold, and faint, and careless asking.

3. It must be in faith, and a confident assurance that God will hear us, in opposition to doubting and distrust.

1. It must be hearty and sincere, in opposition to formal and hypocritical asking. When we pray for God's grace, and Holy Spirit, we must not be *as the hypocrites are*, who pray not so much to be heard of God, as *to be seen of men*; who have no sense of their wants, no hearty desires to obtain those blessings which they beg of God, but only pray out of form and custom, or for ostentation of their piety and devotion. It is not every prayer that is put up to God out of form and custom, that will prevail with God, for the assistance of his grace and Holy Spirit; but it must be serious and in good earnest, it must proceed from a true and real sense of our need of God's Holy Spirit, such a sense as children have of their want of bread, when they are pinched with hunger.

2. This asking must be earnest, and fervent, and importunate, in opposition to cold, and faint, and indifferent asking; because this declares the sincerity of our desires. Those things which we are careless and indifferent about, and do not much matter whether we have them or not, we ask them coldly, and but seldom; if they be not granted at the first asking, we give them over, and look no farther after them; but those things which we heartily desire, and are truly sensible of our want of them, we will use more earnestness and importunity for the obtaining of them; and if we cannot obtain them at first, we will renew our requests, be instant and urgent for them, and if there be any hopes, never give over till we have prevailed.

And that in this manner we ought to beg of God his Holy Spirit, our Saviour declares in those metaphors which he useth of *asking*, and *seeking*, and *knocking*, which signify earnestness, and diligence, and importunity, ver. 9, 10. *I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.* And we have this more plainly declared in the parable before the text, ver. 5, 6, 7, 8. *And he said unto them, which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, friend, lend me three loaves: For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise, and give thee. I say unto you, Tho' he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend: yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.* If mere impudence and importunity in asking, will prevail so much with men, what will not humble and constant supplication obtain from God? And so our Saviour applies this familiar parable, that in like manner we should be importunate with God for spiritual blessings, and as it were give him no rest, till we obtain what we ask, *I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you, &c.* Not that mere importunity prevails with God; but as it is an expression of a just sense of our wants, and of a confident persuasion of God's goodness, so it is effectual to procure the greatest blessings at God's hands.

3. We must ask in faith, and a confident assurance that God will hear us, in opposition to doubting and distrust; with the same, nay, with greater confidence and assurance than children come to their earthly parents, to ask those things of them that are most necessary for them. And this condition or qualification of our prayers our Saviour doth elsewhere frequently require, *Matth. xxi. 22, All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* And *St. James, chap.*

chap. i. 5, 6. directing those who want spiritual wisdom, to ask it of God, immediately subjoins; *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering*; that is, not doubting but that God, to whom he addresseth his prayer, is both able and willing to give him what he asks: and whoever comes to God, not having this apprehension of him, *Let him not think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord*, ver. 7. For upon what ground does he expect any thing from that person, whom he looks upon either as unable, or unwilling to grant his desires? I proceed in the

Third place, to confirm and illustrate the truth of this proposition, that God is very ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. And for the proof of this, I shall only use *two* arguments; from God's free promise and declaration; and from the comparison which our Saviour here useth in the text.

1. From God's free promise and declaration. And besides that here in the text, I might produce several others, but I shall mention only one, which is very plain and express, and conceived in terms as large and universal, as can well be devised, *James i. 5. If any of you* (says the apostle, speaking of Christians) *lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* Where by *wisdom*, according to St. James's notion of it, are, meant all the fruits of the Spirit, all christian graces; for so he tells us, *chap. iii. 17. that the wisdom which is from above, that is, which is wrought by the divine Spirit, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits.* Now if God have freely promised so great a blessing and benefit to men, if they earnestly beg it of him, we need not doubt of his faithfulness to perform and make good what he hath promised.

2. The other argument, which I shall principally insist upon, shall be from the comparison which our Saviour here useth in the text, *If a Son shall ask bread of any of you that is a Father, will he give him a stone?* This is a proverbial speech among the Jews, which seems from them to have been derived to the neighbour nations, as appears from that of *Plautus, Alterâ manu fert lapidem, alterâ panem ostentat*, he carries a stone in one hand, and holds forth bread in the other; *If a Son shall ask bread of any of you that is a Father, will he give him a stone?* That is, if he ask that which is absolutely necessary, will he give him that which will do him no good? *Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?* That is, if he ask that, which tho' it be not absolutely necessary, yet may be very convenient; will he give him that which is hurtful and pernicious? hardly any earthly parent, tho' otherwise never so bad, would deal thus with his children; and can we suspect it of God? certainly it is much farther from him to deny us, his children, those better and more necessary good things, which we humbly and heartily and earnestly beg of him, in a confident persuasion of his goodness.

If ye then being evil (many times bad enough in other respects, and at the best come infinitely short of God in point of benignity and goodness) *know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

This is a plain and undeniable argument, fitted to all capacities, because it proceeds upon *two* suppositions which every man must acknowledge to be true.

1. That earthly parents have generally such a natural affection for their children, as does strongly incline them to give them such good things, as are necessary and convenient for them, and which will not suffer them, instead of good things, to give them such things as either are no wise useful, or any wise hurtful to them: this is a matter of common, and certain, and sensible experience, which no man can deny.

2. The other supposition, which is as evident in reason, as the former is in experience, is this, That God is better than men, and that there is infinitely more goodness in him, than in the best man in the world; because goodness in its most exalted degree, and highest perfection, is essential to that notion which all men have of God; and this being a common principle, in which men are universally agreed, no man can gainsay it.

Now let but these *two* things be supposed, that men, tho' otherwise evil, yet commonly have so much of natural goodness and affection for their children, as to be ready to give them those things which are good for them; and that God

is

is infinitely more liberal and bountiful than men; and it will appear to be a thing highly credible, that this good God will not deny the best of gifts, even his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

But for the farther illustration of this argument, we will consider a little more particularly the terms of the comparison which our Saviour here useth; our *earthly* and our *heavenly Father*; *temporal and spiritual good things*.

1. Our *earthly* and our *heavenly Father*; in which terms the givers are compared together. Now there are *three* considerations in a giver, which make him capable of being bountiful, and dispose him to it.

(1.) That he have wherewithal to be liberal, and can part with it without damage and prejudice to himself.

(2.) That he be good-natur'd, and have a mind to give.

(3.) That he be related to those to whom he gives, and be concerned in their welfare. Now all these considerations are more eminently in God, and with far greater advantage than in any father upon earth, For,

(1.) God hath wherewithal to be liberal, and can confer what benefits he pleaseth, without any harm or prejudice to himself. Earthly parents cannot many times be so good to their children as they desire, because they have it not to bestow; they cannot perhaps feed them plentifully without pinching themselves, nor give them fit provision without impoverishing themselves: but the divine nature is a perpetual and inexhaustible spring of all good things, even of more than he can communicate; in him are all the treasures of riches, and power, and wisdom, and he cannot by giving to others, ever empty or impoverish himself: when he makes the freest communications of his goodness to his creatures, he does not thereby diminish and lessen his native store.

(2.) God hath infinitely more goodness than men, he hath stronger propensions and inclinations to do good, than are to be found in the best natur'd and most generous man in the world. All the goodness that is in the creature, is derived from God, who is the fountain and original of it; it is but an imperfect image, and imperfect representation of that excellency and perfection which the divine nature is possessed of in the highest degree that can be imagined. Men are many times *evil* and *envious*; (for so the word signifies, *If ye being evil*, *ἐνὶ κακίᾳ*, *of an envious, nig-gardly, and illiberal disposition*) but at the best men are of a finite and limited goodness and perfection.

But now no such thing as envy and ill-will can possibly happen to God, who is so rich in his own native store, and so secure of the enjoyment of what he hath, that he can neither hope for the enlargement, nor fear the impairing of his estate.

(3.) God hath a nearer and more intimate relation to us, than our earthly parents, and is more concerned for our happiness. Our earthly parents are but the *fathers of our flesh*, as the apostle speaks, *Heb. xii. 9.* but God is *the father of our spirits*. Nay in respect of our very bodies, God hath the greatest hand in framing of us; 'tis he who *made us in secret, and curiously wrought us in the lowest parts of the earth: in his book all our members were written, which in continuance were fashioned*, *Psal. cxxxix, 15, 16*, so that we being God's creatures, our bodies the work of his hands, and our souls the breath of his mouth, God is more our father than he that begat us, and having a nearer and stronger relation to us, hath a greater care and concernment for our happiness.

So that if our *earthly parents*, who are many times indigent and ill-natur'd, and are but *the fathers of our flesh*, and that but as second causes in subordination to God, the principal author of our beings, I say, if they will *give good things to their children*; how much more shall our *heavenly father*, who is the fountain of all good, and goodness itself, who is our creator, the framer of our bodies, and *the father of our spirits*, be more ready to bestow on us the best things we can beg of him?

2. Let us compare likewise *temporal and spiritual good things*; in which terms you have the gifts compared together. Now there are *two* considerations belonging to a gift, which are apt to move and incline a person to bestow it; if it be such as is necessary, or very convenient for the person on whom it is bestowed; and

and if it be such as the person that bestows it takes great pleasure and delight in the imparting of it.

(1.) If it be such as is necessary, or very convenient for those on whom it is bestowed. Such is bread which earthly parents give to their children; but that is only necessary to the body, and for the support of this frail and temporary life: but the holy Spirit of God is necessary to the life and health of our souls, to our eternal life and happiness. Now our soul being our selves, and eternity the most considerable duration, God's holy Spirit is consequently much more necessary and convenient for us, than any thing that our earthly parents can give us.

(2.) The Spirit of God is such a gift as he takes the greatest pleasure and delight in the imparting and bestowing of it. What can be more acceptable to God, than that his children should be made partakers of his own divine nature, and conformed to his image; than that we should be *holy as God is holy, and renewed after the image of him that hath created us in righteousness and true holiness*? than that human nature should be restored to its primitive perfection and dignity, and recovered to that state in which it came out of God's hands? than to see the ruin and decay of his own workmanship repaired; and his creatures, that were become miserable by the temptation of the Devil, restored to happiness by the operation of the holy Spirit of God?

And this is the proper work of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, to sanctify and renew us, and (as the apostle expresseth it) *to create us again unto good works*, to make us *partakers of his own holiness*, and to restore our souls to that condition that *his soul may have pleasure in us*. What can we imagine more acceptable to God, than that men should be brought to this happy state and temper? A child does not please his father so much when he desires to be instructed by him in learning and virtue, as we please God when we ask his holy Spirit of him: for nothing can be more pleasing to him, than to bestow this best of gifts upon us.

So that the whole force of the argument comes to this, That if we believe that earthly parents have any good inclinations toward their children, and are willing to bestow upon them the necessities of life, we have much more reason to believe that God our heavenly Father is much more ready *to give his holy Spirit to them that ask him*; whether we consider the quality of the giver, or the nature of the gift.

I should now have proceeded to the other particulars which I propounded; but I shall only at present make some short reflections upon what hath already been delivered.

What a comfortable consideration is this, to be so fully assured of God's readiness to bestow all good things upon his children, and even his holy Spirit, if we ask it of him? and what an encouragement is here to constant and fervent prayer to God, who will not deny us the gift of his holy Spirit, if we heartily and earnestly beg it of him? and what an encouragement is here likewise to the resolutions and endeavours of a good life, that so powerful an assistance is so freely offered to us, to enable us to *run the ways of God's commandments*: that God hath promised his holy Spirit to reside and dwell in us, to be a principle of spiritual life to us, and to enable us to all the purposes of obedience and a holy life.

And what infinite cause have we to bless God for the gift of his holy Spirit, and to say with St. Paul, *Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift*. That he hath given his holy Spirit to his church, at first in miraculous powers and gifts for the preaching of the christian religion in the world, and ever since in such degrees of assistance, as were necessary in the several ages of the church, for the preservation of the christian religion in the world; that he hath given his holy Spirit to every particular member of his church, for the sanctifying and renewing of our natures, *to strengthen us to every good word and work, and to keep us by his mighty power through faith unto salvation*.

And this sanctifying virtue of the holy Ghost, enabling us to do the will of God, is more than any miraculous powers whatsoever. So our Saviour tells us, *Mat. vii. 21, 22, 23. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?*
and

and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Men may do wonders by the power of the Holy Ghost, and yet be shut out of the kingdom of heaven; only they that are assisted by the Spirit of God to do the will of God, shall be admitted into heaven.

And this is matter of greater joy and comfort to us, than to work the greatest wonders, and to have power over Devils, to cast them out of the bodies of men, *Luke x. 20. Rejoice not in this, saith our blessed Saviour, that the spirits are made subject to you, but rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven.* How is that? The sanctifying virtue of God's Spirit is the *pledge* and *earnest* of our heavenly inheritance, and that whereby we are *sealed to the day of redemption.*

S E R M O N C X C I X .

The Efficacy of Prayer, for obtaining the Holy Spirit.

L U K E xi. 13.

How much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?

*The Second
Sermon on
this Text,*

I N discoursing on these words, I propos'd,
First, To endeavour to shew what is comprehended in the gift of the Holy Spirit mention'd in my text, and how great a blessing and benefit it is.

Secondly, What kind of asking is here required.

Thirdly, To confirm and illustrate the truth of this proposition, That God is very ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

Fourthly, To remove a considerable objection, to which this discourse may seem liable. And,

Fifthly, To make some practical application of it to ourselves.

The *three* former of these I have dispatch'd, and shall now proceed to the

Fourth thing which I propounded, which was to remove an objection to which this discourse may seem liable; the removal whereof will conduce very much to the clearing this argument, about which men seem to have had very confused apprehensions. The objection is this; That none can ask the Spirit aright, but they that have the Spirit; and if this be so, then this large declaration of God's goodness and readiness to bestow the Holy Spirit upon them that ask him comes to nothing; for a promise signifies nothing, which confers a benefit on a person, upon a condition impossible by him to be perform'd, unless he first have the benefit which is promised; and to use a familiar comparison, if this were the meaning of it, it would be like a father's jesting with his child, when he is fallen, and bidding him come to him, and he will help him up. Now if God thus promise his Holy Spirit to them that ask it, with this reservation, that no man can ask God's Spirit, unless he have it, then this promise amounts to nothing.

And that no man can ask God's Spirit without his Spirit, (that is, put up any prayer that is acceptable to God, without the assistance of God's Spirit) seems to me in effect generally granted by those who assert, that no unregenerate man can pray to God aright, or perform any other duties of religion in an acceptable manner; for to be unregenerate, and not to have the Spirit of God, are equivalent expressions in Scripture, St. Paul having expressly told us, that *if any man have not*

the Spirit of God, he is none of his, that is, does not belong to him, as every regenerate person most certainly does.

Besides that the scripture tells us, that all the prayers, and all the sacrifices, that is, all religious duties performed by a wicked man, are *an abomination to the Lord*: because no prayer can be acceptable to God, which does not proceed from sincerity, and is not put up to God in faith; now sincerity and faith are graces proper to the regenerate.

So that the objection in short is this, How can any man that hath not the Spirit of God, ask any thing of God aright, that is, sincerely, fervently, and in faith? And if without God's Spirit, no man can beg his Spirit of him, what then signifies this promise, that *God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him*?

For the satisfaction of this objection, I shall lay down *these* propositions, which if they be well consider'd will conduce very much to the clearing of this matter.

First, That in the interpretation of promises and conditions annex'd to them, we ought above all things to take heed, that we do not so interpret either the promise, or condition, as to make the promise void, and of none effect; for this cannot be done without a notorious affront to him that made the promise, who is presumed, if he was serious and sincere, to have intended a real benefit and advantage by his promise. And this rule holds not only in the interpretation of promises, but of all covenants, and contracts; *in omni interpretatione pactorum, contractuum & promissorum, illud præcipue cavendum, ne in vanum recidant*; in the interpretation of all covenants, and contracts, and promises, we are principally to take care, that we do not so interpret them as to make them signify nothing: and if this hold among men, much more ought we to be cautious and tender of interpreting the promises of God to a vain and trifling sense; for we cannot dishonour the goodness and veracity of God more, than to suppose that he mocks men by his promises, and makes a shew and offer of a benefit, when he really intends none; for all such proceedings as would be unbecoming the sincerity and integrity of a good man, are to be removed at the greatest distance from God, *All whose ways are faithfulness and truth, who is not as man, that he should lie, or as the son of man, that he should repent.*

Secondly, I do not see but if this were the true sense and meaning of these words of our Saviour, that though *God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*, yet none but those who have the Spirit of God, can ask it of him; I say, I do not see but that it must necessarily be granted, that such a promise as this amounts to nothing; because according to this interpretation of it, the benefit promised would be suspended upon a condition, which no man can perform, unless he be first partaker of the benefit; which is, in plain *English*, to promise to bestow a thing upon a man on this condition, that he first have the thing which I promise to bestow upon him, which signifies just nothing, but is lufury and trifling, and consequently not to be imagined to be the meaning of a divine promise. There cannot be a greater absurdity in divinity, than to put such a sense upon the promises of God, as does plainly evacuate them, and make them of none effect. This be far from us, as the apostle says upon another occasion, *Shall we make the promises of God of none effect? God forbid.*

And whereas it is commonly said, that the meaning of our Saviour's promise here in the text is this, that those who have the Spirit of God already, if they ask a greater measure of it, he will not deny it to them; though this be true in itself, that God will not deny greater degrees of the grace and assistance of his Holy Spirit to them that beg it of him, and may by a just parity of reason be inferred from this promise, or contained in it as part of the meaning of it, yet to make this the whole meaning of it, seems to be a very forced and unreasonable limitation of these general words, wherein this promise is conceived; for if we look back to the 10th verse, the words are as general as could well be devised, *Every one that asketh, receiveth; and every one that seeketh, findeth*; and containing matter of favour and benefit, they ought in reason to be extended and enlarged as far as may be, but by no means to be restrained without evident reason. Now so far is there from being any evident reason for this, that there seems to me to be an invincible one to the contrary, why they should not be thus restrained, and that is this: if this promise of our Saviour's were thus to be limited; then all other promises of the like

nature, ought in like manner to be interpreted; which cannot be without manifest violence and self-contradiction. I will instance in two other promises of the like nature and importance. The *first* is *Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27.* God there promises to reclaim them from their idolatry, by convincing them of their sin, and giving them repentance, and his holy spirit to regenerate and sanctify them, *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.* Now that which I would argue from hence, is this; Those idolatrous Jews to whom God promises that he will cleanse them, and give them a new heart, and a new spirit, and put his spirit into them, were as yet unregenerate, and consequently, as the objection supposeth, could not pray for these blessings, nor ask them of God in a right manner; and yet he suspends these blessings upon the condition of their praying for them, as is evident, *ver. 37. Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.* From whence it is plain, that God would not bestow these blessings upon them, without their seeking to him for them. Now if these persons, because they were unregenerate, could not pray for these things, then these promises signified nothing; which is by no means to be imagined of the promises of God. So that it is clear, that the Spirit of God is here promised to the unregenerate, upon condition of their suing to God for it; and if so, there can be no reason to restrain the promise in the text, which is of the same nature, and made upon the same condition, to the regenerate only.

The other text I shall mention, is *James i. 5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* In these words St. James, under the notion of wisdom (as I told you before) doth comprehend all the fruits of the Spirit, which are the effect of regeneration and sanctification. Now this promise being conceived in so general terms, cannot without manifest force and violence be restrained only to the regenerate; for then the promise should not have run thus, *If any man lack wisdom; but, If any man have this spiritual wisdom already, let him ask more of God.* You see then what reason there is, why this promise of God's Holy Spirit should be understood in the latitude wherein it is express'd, and not restrain'd to the regenerate only.

Thirdly, If by *having the Spirit of God*, be understood the general and common influence of God's Spirit upon the minds of men, whereby they are quicken'd and excited to their duty; I grant that no man that hath not the Spirit of God in this sense, can pray to God, or acceptably perform any other duty of religion: and this assertion is very agreeable to the phrase and language of the holy scriptures, which attribute all good motions and actions to the Spirit of God working in us, and assisting us; and in this sense unregenerate men are under the influence of God's Spirit, or else they could not be said to resist it: but they have not the Spirit of God *dwelling in them*, which is the most proper sense of *having the Spirit of God*, in which sense the apostle says, *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:* but then it is specially to be noted, that the common and transient operation of God's Spirit, which is preparatory to conversion and regeneration, and whereby God works in men a sense of sin, and some inclination and disposition to goodness, is by our Saviour peculiarly attributed to the Father, as his proper work, in which sense our Saviour says, *John vi. 44. No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. Verse 45. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* Now men are said to learn of the Father, and to be drawn by him, by those preparatory dispositions for the receiving of the Christian religion, which were wrought in men by that natural sense of good and evil, which they have by the law of nature, which is properly the dispensation of the Father, as being the immediate effect of God's creation, as a late judicious writer hath very well observed, and more largely explained.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, But if by *having the spirit of God*, be meant the special effect of regeneration and sanctification, and the permanent influence and constant residence of God's Holy Spirit in good men, then I make no doubt to say, that those who have not the Spirit of God in this sense, may ask his Spirit of him; that is, those who are not yet regenerate and sanctified, may in an acceptable manner pray to God to give them his Holy Spirit, to the purposes of sanctification and perseverance in goodness; and they may ask this of God, sincerely, earnestly, and in faith, which are the qualifications of an acceptable prayer. And this I think may be evidently made appear, both from scripture, and by good consequence from the concessions of all sorts of divines.

1. From scripture. It is plain that wicked and unregenerate men are commanded and required to pray to this purpose. Not to mention the general commands concerning prayer, which do certainly oblige unregenerate men, I will produce one plain and undeniable instance, *Acts* viii. 22, 23. where St. Peter directs *Simon Magus*, whom he expressly declares to be in an unregenerate state, to pray to God for the pardon of his great sin, which certainly he would not have done, had he thought an unregenerate man could not pray in an acceptable manner; because his counsel would have been to no purpose: but it is plain that St. Peter was so far from thinking that an unregenerate man could not pray acceptably to God, that he gives this as a reason why he should pray; because he was unregenerate: *Pray to God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee: for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.*

2. This will appear farther by clear consequence, from the concessions of all sorts of divines, and principles granted on all hands.

1. It is universally granted, that it is a thing very pleasing and acceptable to God, that men should pray to be regenerate and sanctified; so that the matter of this prayer is unquestionably acceptable.

2. It is likewise granted on all hands, that before a man is regenerate and sanctified, he must be made sensible of his evil and sinful state, and of his great need of God's grace and Spirit, and that God's Spirit is able to work this change in him, and that it is the will of God that he should be regenerated and sanctified.

3. It is likewise generally granted, that these preparatory works of regeneration, these beginnings of our repentance and turning to God, and all desires and endeavours to that purpose, are acceptable to God.

Now from these concessions it plainly follows, that an unregenerate man, may pray to God acceptably for his holy Spirit, to regenerate and sanctify him. For,

1. The matter of his prayer is very acceptable to God, according to the *first* concession.

2. The manner of it may be acceptable, because an unregenerate man may pray for this sincerely, with earnestness, and in faith: sincerely, because he may put up this prayer to God, out of a true sense of his miserable and sinful state, and his great need of God's grace and holy Spirit; and he that is truly sensible of this, cannot dissemble with God, he cannot but be very real and sincere in this request: and this sense of his condition, and the need of what he asks, will make him earnest and importunate: and he may pray in faith, that is, not doubting but that God is able and willing to grant him what he asks, because he may be convinced that the Spirit is able to work this change in him, and that this is the will of God, that he should be regenerated and sanctified, according to the *second* concession.

3. There's no reason to think that God will not accept such a prayer as this; because these preparative works of regeneration, *viz.* a sense of our sinful state, and of our need of God's grace and Spirit, and earnest desires and prayers for these, are acceptable to God, according to the *third* concession. So that now I hope that this objection, which hath been so troublesome to many, is fully satisfied.

As for those texts where it is said, that *the prayers and the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord*, I shall briefly return this answer, That these texts are not to be understood of a wicked and unregenerate man, simply as

such, but as resolved to continue such. And thus Solomon elsewhere in the *Proverbs* explains what he means by a wicked man, *Prov. xxviii. 9. He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.* So that the wicked man, whose prayer is an abomination, is such an one as is obstinately and resolvedly disobedient, such an one as *turneth away his ear from hearing the law.* And David much to the same purpose, *Psal. l. 15, 16, 17. Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. But unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee,* Such wicked men as will not be reclaimed, what have they to do to pray, or perform any other act of religion? nothing that they do, whilst such, can be acceptable to God. And to the same sense David says elsewhere, *if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.* God will reject the prayers of the best men, if they retain a secret love to any sin.

If it be yet farther objected, that unregenerate men are out of Christ, in and through whom we are accepted: to this I answer, that those only who are in Christ, are in a state of perfect acceptance with God: but the beginnings of this state, and all tendency towards it, such as is hearty and earnest prayer to God for his Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify us, have their degrees of acceptance from their relation to the perfect state wherof they are the beginnings, and toward which they tend: for by the same reason that a regenerate state is acceptable to God, all the beginnings of it, and preparations to it are proportionably acceptable; the degrees of acceptance being proportionable to the difference which is between the beginning of a thing and the perfection of it.

Having thus endeavour'd to clear this truth, I come in the

Fifth and last place to make some brief application of it to our selves.

1. This is matter of great encouragement to us, under the sense of our own weakness and impotency. When we consider the corruption of our nature, the strength of our lust, and the malice and power of the devil, and compare our weakness with the strength of those mighty enemies of our souls, we are apt to despond in our minds, and our hearts are ready to fail within us; like the people of *Israel*, when they heard the report of the spies, concerning the strength of the land which they were to conquer, and the terror of the Inhabitants, they wish themselves almost dead, for fear of death; *would to God we had died in the land of Egypt; or would to God we had died in the wilderness. Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land, to fall by the sword? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?* *Numb. xiv. 2, &c.* Thus we are apt to be disheartened when we look only to our selves, and consider the power of our enemies; but when we look beyond our selves, as *Caleb* and *Joshua* did, to that presence and strength of God, which was promised to go along with them; if we would but consider those gracious and powerful assistances of God's Holy Spirit, which are offer'd to us, and are ready to join with us in this holy warfare of fighting against sin, and subduing and mortifying our lusts, we should then encourage our selves as they did, *fear ye not the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, the Lord is with us; fear them not,* *Numb. xiv. 9.* If we would but apply our selves to God for the aids of his Grace and Holy Spirit, and make use of that assistance which he offers, we should (as the apostle speaks in another case, *Heb. xi. 34.*) *out of weakness be made strong, wax valiant in fight, and be able to put to flight the armies of aliens.* If we would but wisely consider our own strength, *how should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight?* all our spiritual enemies would quail before us, and as 'tis said of the *Canaanites*, *Josh. v. 1. their hearts would melt, and there would be no more spirit left in them.* *2 Kings vi. 15.* when *Elisha's* servant saw a host, compassing the city of *Samaria* with horses and chariots, he was in great fear and perplexity, and said, *master, what shall we do?* but when upon *Elisha's* prayer, *the Lord had opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold the mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha:* then he took heart, and his fears vanished, *because those that were with them were more than they that were against them.* Thus, if our eyes were opened by faith to discern those invisible aids and assistances which stand by us, how should this raise our courage and our confidence,

confidence, and make us to triumph with the apostle, *Rom. viii. 31. If God be for us, who can be against us?* and to rebuke our fears, and the despondency of our spirits, as *David* does, *why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? trust still in God:* and to say with him, when *multitudes of enemies compass us about, in the name of the Lord we will destroy them.* *Eph. vi, 10.* when the apostle represents to the christians what enemies they had to contest withal, *we fight not only against flesh and blood;* that is, not only against men who persecute us; but against devils, who continually infest and tempt us, *against principalities and powers, &c.* he encourageth them against all these, by the strength of God; *finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* Thus we should encourage our selves in God, and animate our resolutions from the consideration of God's Holy Spirit, *that Spirit of might and of power,* which God is ready to give to every one of us, to assist us to do whatever he requires of us. And we have no reason to complain of weakness, so long as the strength of God stands by us, and the powerful aids of God's Spirit are ready to join themselves to us.

2. Let us earnestly beg of God his Holy Spirit, seeing it so necessary to us, and God is so ready to bestow this best of gifts upon us. Bread is not more necessary to the support of our natural life, than the Holy Spirit of God is to our spiritual life and strength: and there is no father upon earth more ready to give bread to his children that cry after him, than God is to give his Holy Spirit to those who heartily and earnestly beg it of him. Did we but know how great a gift the Spirit of God is, and how necessary to us, we would not lose such a blessing, for want of asking: but we would be importunate with God, and give him no rest, *ask, and seek, and knock,* and address our selves to him with all earnestness, and never give over till our desires were granted.

3. Let us take heed of *grieving the Spirit of God,* and provoking him to withdraw himself from us. As God is very ready to give his Spirit to us, so we should give the best entertainment we can to so great a guest, lest we give him cause to take away his Holy Spirit from us. And there are *two* things chiefly which provoke God hereto.

(1.) If we resist and quench the motions of his Spirit, and be incompassionate to the dictates and suggestions of it. We affront the Spirit of God which is given us for our guidance and direction, when we will not be ruled, and governed, and led by it; we thrust the Spirit of God out of his office, and make his presence useless and unnecessary to us; and this causeth him to go away grieved from us.

(2.) If we harbour and entertain any thing that is of a contrary quality and nature to him, and inconsistent with him; and of such a nature is every lust and corruption that is cherish'd in our Souls. The Spirit of God is the best friend in the world: but as friends have the most tender resentments of unkind usage, so the Spirit of God is of a most tender and delicate sense, and cannot bear unkindness, especially such an unkindness as to take in to him the greatest enemy he hath in the world: for there is no such strong antipathy in nature, as there is between sin, and the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit of God cannot endure to dwell in an impure soul. If we would have the Spirit of God abide with us, we must give no entertainment to any lust, we must banish the love of all sin for ever out of our hearts: for if we harbour any lust in our bosom, it will be to us, as *Dalilah* was to *Sampson*, it will insensibly bereave us of our strength: *the Spirit of God will depart from us, and we shall be like other men.*

4. And lastly, God's readiness to afford the grace and assistance of his Holy Spirit to us, to enable us to the performance of our duty, and the obedience of his laws, makes all wilful sin and disobedience inexcusable. Let us not pretend any longer the impossibility, or insuperable difficulty of our duty, when so powerful an assistance is offer'd to us. If any man come short of happiness for want of performing the conditions of the gospel, it is by his own wilful fault and negligence; because he would not beg God's grace, and because he would not make use of it. If any man be wicked, and continue in a sinful course, it is not for want of power, but of will to do better. God is always before-hand with us in the offers of his grace and assistance, and is wanting to no man in that which is necessary to make him good and happy. No man shall be able to plead at the day

day of judgment want of power to have done his duty: for *God will judge the world in righteousness*; and then I am sure he will condemn no man, for not having done that which was impossible for him to do. God hath done enough to every man to leave him without excuse. *St. Paul* tells us, that the blind heathens should have no apology to make for themselves. Next to the being of God, and his goodness and justice, I do as verily believe it, as I do any thing in the world, that no man shall be able to say to God at the great day, Lord, I would have repented of my sins, and obeyed thy laws, but I wanted power to do it; I was left destitute of the grace which was necessary to the performance and discharge of my duty; I did earnestly beg thy Holy Spirit, but thou didst deny me. No man shall have the face to say this to God at the great day; every man's conscience will then acquit God, and lay all the fault upon his own folly and neglect: for then *every mouth shall be stopped, and God shall be justified in his saying, and overcome when we are judged.*

S E R M O N CC.

The bad and good Use of God's signal Judgments upon others.

L U K E xiii. 5.

I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

THE occasion of these words you have at the beginning of the chapter; *there were present at that season* (says the Evangelist) *some that told our Saviour of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.* These in all probability were some of the faction of *Judas Gaulonita*, who about that time, as *Josephus* tells us, had stirred up the *Galileans* to a sedition against the *Roman* government, under a pretence of asserting their liberty, by freeing themselves from the *Roman* tribute; and some of these, coming to *Jerusalem* to sacrifice, (as the custom of the *Jews* was, especially at the time of the passover) *Pilate* caused them to be slain upon the place, while they were at this service, shedding their blood with that of the beasts, which were killed for sacrifice. The report of this profane cruelty being brought to our Saviour, he (as his custom was in all his conversation, to raise some useful meditation, from such occurrences that happened, and to turn them to a spiritual advantage) takes occasion from the relation of this sad accident, to correct a very vitious humour, which hath always reigned in the world, of censuring the faults of others, whilst we overlook our own.

The principle of self-love, which was planted in innocent nature, is by the fall and corruption of man degenerated into self-flattery; so that it is now almost become natural to men, to supply the want of a good conscience, by a good conceit of themselves. Hence it comes to pass that men are so ready to take all advantages to confirm themselves in that false peace which they have created to themselves in their own imaginations; and so they can but maintain a comfortable opinion of themselves, they matter not how uncharitable they are to others; and knowing no better way to countenance this fond conceit of themselves, than by fancying God to be their friend; hence it comes to pass, that they are so apt to interpret the several providences of God towards others, in favour of themselves; and

and to abuse the judgments of God, which fall upon their neighbours, into an argument of their own comparative innocency.

And therefore our Saviour, (who *knew what was in man*, and what kind of conclusions men are apt to draw from such occurrences of providence as this which was now presented) endeavours in the *first* place to prevent the bad use they were likely to make of it; *Suppose ye*, (says he) *that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay, &c.* To this instance of the *Galileans* he adds another of the same kind, well known to all that dwelt in *Jerusalem*: and that was of the eighteen persons, who were slain by the fall of a tower, which was in the pool of *Siloam* at the foot of mount *Sion*, verse the 4th, or those eighteen on whom the tower of *Siloam* fell, think ye that they were sinners above all that dwelt in *Jerusalem*? *I tell you, Nay.*

And having thus anticipated their censuring of others, our Saviour proceeds to awaken them to a consideration and care of themselves, *I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

The general sense of which words is, That impenitency in sin will certainly be the ruin of men sooner or later: it will probably bring great mischiefs and calamities upon men in this world; however, it will infallibly plunge them into misery in the next. But besides the certain denunciation of misery and ruin to all impenitent sinners, which is the largest sense of the words, and agreeable to many other express texts of scripture, it is probable enough, that they may more immediately and particularly refer to those temporal calamities which were to befall the *Jews*, and be-spoken by our Saviour by way of prediction, foretelling what would be the fate of the whole *Jewish* nation, if they continued impenitent, πάντες ὁμοίως ἀπολείψετε, *Ye shall all perish in like manner*; that is, if ye do not repent, besides the vengeance of another world, a temporal judgment as sad as these I have instanced in, and not much unlike them, shall come upon this whole nation: and so indeed it came to pass afterwards. For *Josephus* tells us, that at the time of the passover, when the whole nation of the *Jews* were met together, as their custom was at *Jerusalem*, they were all shut up and besieged by the *Romans*: and he tells us farther, that in the time of that siege, upon a sedition among themselves, a great multitude of them were slain in the temple, as they were sacrificing, and their blood poured forth, together with that of the beasts which were to be offered, as had happened before to the *Galileans*.

From the words thus explain'd, I shall observe these *two* things.

First, The wrong use which men are apt to make of the extraordinary and signal judgments of God upon others. *Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?* intimating that men are very apt so to conclude, and that the *Jews* did so.

Secondly, The right use that we shall make of these things, which is, to reflect upon our own sins, and repent of them, lest the like or greater judgments overtake us. *I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

First, The wrong use which men are apt to make of the extraordinary and signal judgments of God upon others; and that is to be uncharitable and censorious towards others, which is commonly consequent upon a gross and stupid neglect of ourselves. For men do not usually entertain and cherish this censorious humour for its own sake, but in order to some farther end; they are not so uncharitable merely out of spite and malice to others, but out of self-flattery and a fond affection to themselves. This makes them forward to represent others to all the disadvantage that may be, and to render them as bad as they can, that they themselves may appear less evil in their own eyes, and may have a colour to set off themselves by the comparison. It is the nature of guilt to flee from itself, and to use all possible arts to hide and lessen it. For guilt in the soul is like deformity in the body. Persons very deformed seldom arrive to that absurd conceit of themselves, as to think themselves beauties; but because they cannot think so, they do all they can to comfort and commend themselves by comparison. Hence men are apt to censure and aggravate the faults and miscarriages of their neighbours, that their own may appear the less; for a lesser evil in respect of a greater, hath some face and appearance of good; and therefore men are ready to take all advantages to represent others as bad as may be: and because there can be no greater

greater evidence, that a man is a great sinner, than if he be declared to be so from heaven; hence it is, that men are so forward to interpret the remarkable judgments of God upon any person, as an argument of his being a more notorious offender than others.

For the farther explication and illustration of this point, I shall do these *three* things.

I. I shall shew that men are very apt to make this bad use of the signal judgments of God upon others.

II. I shall more particularly consider several of the rash conclusions which men are apt to draw from the judgments of God upon others; whether upon publick societies and communities of men, or upon particular persons.

III. I shall shew how unreasonable it is to draw from hence any such rash and uncharitable conclusions concerning others, and likewise how foolish it is from hence to draw comfort and encouragement to ourselves.

I. That men are very apt to make this bad use of the signal judgments of God upon others. This our Saviour plainly intimates in the text, *Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, think ye that they were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem?* By which manner of speaking, our Saviour signifies, that men are very apt thus to suppose, that those upon whom the extraordinary judgments of God fall, are no ordinary sinners, but are guilty of somewhat above the common rate of men.

Thus we find *Job's* friends, when they saw him afflicted by the hand of God, in so strange and extraordinary a manner, from hence presently concluded, he must needs be a prodigious sinner; and because they could find no evidence of this in his life and actions, therefore they concluded that his wickedness was secret, and that it lay there where they could not see it, in his heart and thoughts: for this they laid down for a certain conclusion, that being so remarkable a sufferer, he must needs be a great sinner; and because they could discern no such thing in his outward conversation, they charged him with hypocrisy, and concluded all his external profession of piety and religion, to be false and counterfeit.

So likewise, when the man that was born blind was brought to our Saviour, *John ix, 2.* the disciples presently ask'd him, *Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?* This was that which lay uppermost in their minds, the very first thing that suggested itself to their thoughts: surely this judgment was inflicted upon this man for some particular and extraordinary sin, which either he, or (because that was not so likely) his parents had been guilty of.

And we find in common experience, how prone men are to make uncharitable constructions of the judgments of God upon others, and grievously to censure those whom God hath smitten; partly because it looks like a vindication of themselves from the guilt of the like crimes, since they are not involved in the like sufferings; partly to gratify their pride and curiosity, in seeming to understand the reason and end of God's judgments, as if they had been of his council, and saw farther into the reasons of his providence than other men; like some pragmatical people in civil matters, who, though they think no more than their neighbours, yet will needs seem to understand those hidden and secret springs which move publick affairs: and which is yet worse, many times to gratify their own passions and foolish conceits, that God is angry with those things and persons which displease them, and that God's judgments are expressions of his particular dislike of those whom they disaffect, and would certainly punish, if the government of the world were in their hands. Or lastly, Men think it a piece of piety, and affectionate zeal for God, and a taking of his part, to censure those heavily, whom God afflicts severely; like some foolish parasites, who if they see a great man be angry with any one and strike him, they think themselves bound to fall upon him, and out of an officious flattery will beat him too. But from whatever cause it proceeds, it is certainly a very bad thing, and our Saviour here in the text does with great vehemency deny, that any such conclusion can certainly be collected from the judgments of God upon others; *I tell you, Nay.* And to express this more vehemently, he repeats it again, *I tell you, Nay.* Let us therefore,

II. More

II. More particularly consider some of the rash conclusions, which men are apt to draw from the judgments of God upon others, whether upon publick societies and communities of men, or upon particular persons.

1. It is rash, where there is no divine revelation in the case, to be peremptory as to the particular sin or kind of it, so as to say, that for such a sin God sent such a judgment upon a particular person, or upon a company of men, unless the judgment be a natural effect and consequent of such a sin; as if a drunken man die of a surfeit, or a lewd person of a disease that is the proper effect of such a vice, or if the punishment ordained by law for such a crime overtake the offender; in these and such like cases, it is neither rash nor uncharitable, to say, such a mischief befel a man for such a fault; because such an evil is evidently the effect of such a sin: but in other cases, peremptorily to conclude, is great rashness.

Thus the heathens of old laid all those fearful judgments of God, which fell upon the *Roman* empire in the first ages of christianity, upon the christians, as if they had been sent by God on purpose to testify his displeasure against that new sect of religion. And thus every party deals with those that are opposite to them, out of a fond persuasion that God is like themselves, and that he cannot but hate those whom they hate, and punish those whom they would punish, if the sway and government of things were permitted to them.

Thus the papists, on the one hand, attribute all the judgments of God upon this nation, the confusion and distractions of so many years, and those later judgments wherewith God hath visited us in so dreadful a manner, to our schism and heresy, as the proper cause of them: (for so they call our reformation of ourselves from their errors and corruptions) but to what cause then will they ascribe the great felicity of queen *Elizabeth's* long reign, and the peace of king *James* his reign? And then on the other hand, some of the dissenters from our church are wont to ascribe these calamities to a quite different cause. That our reformation hath not gone far enough from the church of *Rome*. It is hard to say which of these conclusions is most rash and unreasonable; I wish other reasons of these calamities were not too visible and notorious; the horrible impiety and wickedness which abounds and reigns amongst us.

2. It is rash likewise for any man, without revelation, to conclude peremptorily, that God must needs in his judgments only have respect to some late and fresh sins, which were newly committed; and that all his arrows are only levelled against those impieties of men which are now upon the stage, and in present view. This is rash and groundless; and men herein take a measure of God by themselves, and because they are mightily affected with the present, and sensible of a fresh provocation, and want to revenge themselves while the heat is upon them; therefore they think God must do so too. But there is nothing occasions more mistakes in the world about God and his providence, than to bring him to our standard, and to measure his thoughts by our thoughts, and the ways and methods of his providence by our ways. Justice in God is a wise, and calm, and steady principle, which as to the time, and circumstances of its exercise, is regulated by his wisdom. Past and present are very material differences to us, but they signify little to God, whose vast and comprehensive understanding takes in all differences of time, and looks upon them at one view; so that when the judgments of God follow the sins of men at a great distance, *God is not slack, as men count slackness: for a thousand years are in his sight but as one day, and one day as a thousand years*; as the apostle reasons about this very case I am now speaking of, 2 *Pet.* iii. 8.

And to convince men of their error and mistake in this particular, the scripture hath given us many instances to the contrary, that the justice of God hath many times a great retrospection, and punisheth the sins of men a long time after the commission of them. This he threatens in the second commandment, *To visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him*. Thus we find he dealt with *Ahab*, *He did not bring the evil in his days, but in his son's days he brought it upon his house*, the first of *Kings*, xxi. 29. So likewise we find, 2 *Sam.* 21. God brought three years famine upon *Israel*, in the days of *David*, for a national sin committed in *Saul's* reign:

namely, for the cruelty exercised upon the *Gibeonites*, contrary to the public faith of the nation given to them. So likewise the extirpation of the *Amorites*, and the other inhabitants of *Canaan*, was not a judgment inflicted by God upon them, only for the sins of that present age, but for the iniquity which had been many ages in filling up, as may plainly be collected from the expression, *Gen. xv. 16.* *The iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full*, which was spoken four or five generations before they were rooted out. And so also our Saviour tells us, that *the blood of all the prophets and righteous men which had been shed in all ages, should come upon that generation.*

Nay, if this were not so, *How should God judge the world?* And if it be consistent with the justice of God to respite the greatest part of the punishment of sinners to another world; then certainly he may, without any imputation of injustice, defer the punishment of sin in this world.

3. It is rash to conclude from little circumstances of judgments, or some fanciful parallel betwixt the sin and the punishment, what sinners, and what persons in particular God designed to punish by such a calamity. There is scarce any thing betrays men more to rash and ungrounded censures and determinations concerning the judgments of God, than a superstitious observation of some little circumstances belonging to them, and a conceit of a seeming parallel between such a sin, and such a judgment.

This was the ground of *Shimei's* rash determination concerning *David*, and what particular sin of his it was, for which God permitted his son *Abshalom* to rise up in rebellion against him, *2 Sam. xvi. 8.* *The Lord hath returned upon thee*, (says he) *all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned, and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Abshalom thy son; and behold thou art taken in thy own mischief.* Here seemed to be as handsome a parallel between this misfortune which befel *David*, and his carriage towards the house of *Saul*, as can easily happen in any judgment. *David* had carried away the kingdom from the family of *Saul*, his father-in-law; and now by the providence of God, *David's* own son *Abshalom* seems to be stirred up to supplant his father, and to ravish the kingdom out of his hands; the suitableness of the judgment to the supposed sin of *David*, would tempt any man that had the curiosity to pry into the judgments of God, and a fancy apt to be pleased with parallels, to have looked upon this censure of *Shimei*, as not without ground: for tho' *David* was in no fault as to *Saul's* house, tho' in truth and reality he had the best title to the kingdom that could be, it being disposed to him by God's appointment; yet because *Samuel's* anointing him to be king was a thing privately done, and so might not either be publickly known, or not publickly believed, there seems to be a very fair colour and pretence for this censure of *Shimei*.

And therefore methinks the consideration of this one instance should very much deter wise men from peremptory conclusions concerning the judgments of God, upon such slight grounds as a supposed parallel between the sin and the punishment, and yet we find all sorts of men very superstitiously affected this way; all parties are very greedy to catch at any shadow of a parallel, between the judgments which befel their enemies, and the sins which they suppose them to be guilty of, and are apt to cry up such things as evident testimonies from heaven of God's displeasure against those whom they have a mind to make odious.

In the beginning of the Reformation, when *Zuinglius* was slain in a battle by the Papists, and his body burnt, his heart was found entire in the ashes; from whence (saith the historian) his enemies concluded the obdurateness of his heart; but his friends, the firmness and sincerity of it in the true religion. Both these censures seem to be built upon the same ground of fancy and imagination: but it is a wise and well grounded observation, which *Thuanus* the historian, (who was himself of the *Roman* communion) makes upon it, *Adeo turbatis odio aut amore animis, ut sit in religionis dissensionibus, pro se quisque omnia superstitiose interpretatur:* Thus (says he) mens minds being prejudiced before-hand by love or hatred, (as it commonly falls out in differences of religion) each party superstitiously interprets the little circumstances of every event in favour of it self. Every thing hath two handles; and a good wit and a strong imagination may find something in every

every judgment, whereby he may with some appearance of reason turn the cause of the judgment upon his adversary. Fancy is an endless thing; and if we will go this way to work, then he that hath the best wit, is like to be the best interpreter of God's judgments.

I do not deny, (as I touch'd before) but where the sin is evident, and the punishment is the genuine product and natural effect of the sin, we may, without uncharitableness, ascribe the punishment to the sin, as the particular cause of it; as sickness to intemperance, and poverty to sloth and prodigality: or if a judgment be remarkably inflicted upon a person, in the very act of some notorious sin: or if when a person hath been guilty of a sin, which is unquestionably so, and out of all controversy, if afterwards a judgment befall that person, which carries the very signature of the sin upon it; as when the dogs licked *Ahab's* blood, in the very same place where he had shed the blood of *Naboth*; in these and the like cases, a man may without rashness and uncharitableness fix the cause of such a judgment upon such a sin; but then, as I said before, the sin must be very evident and out of dispute, and the punishment must carry so plain a mark and signature upon it, as, without straining, and the help of fancy, is obvious to every one's observation.

And yet even in these cases, the party himself upon whom the judgment falls may better make the interpretation, than a by-stander; and therefore the Scripture, as it is in all other things very instructive, so particularly in this matter it observes this decorum, not to bring in others making interpretations of the judgments of God, but the persons themselves, upon whom the judgments fall. Thus *Adonibezek*, *Judges* i. 6, 7. when the men of *Judah* had taken him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes, the Scriptures do not bring in others making a censure and interpretation of this judgment of God upon him; but bring him in making this reflection upon himself, *Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs, and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me.* So likewise *Jacob's* sons, when they were brought into trouble in *Egypt*, about their brother *Benjamin*, they presently reflect upon their sin against their brother *Joseph*, *Gen.* xlii. 21, 22. *They said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us. Therefore behold also his blood is required.* They took notice of the resemblance betwixt the sin and the punishment; they had sinned concerning their brother, and they were punished in a brother.

4. It is rash likewise to determine any thing concerning the end and consequence of God's judgments. Commonly all parties that are down are apt to sooth and flatter themselves, that God intends, by such and such judgments upon their adversaries, to make way for the restoration of their own sect, and the restitution of those things which they desire. Others, who are more melancholy and concerned, are apt to look upon the worst side of things, and to imagine dreadful and dismal consequences. But it is a fond thing for us to pretend to know the secret ends and designs of the divine providence: for sometimes God makes one calamity the forerunner of another; and sometimes again his omnipotent wisdom forceth good out of evil, and makes a great judgment in the issue to turn to a mighty blessing.

Jacob thought the loss of his son *Joseph* one of the greatest calamities that could have befallen him, when it was the greatest mercy to his family that could be: for in truth the providence of God sent him as an harbinger into *Egypt* to provide for his father and his family.

'Tis observed by the wise author of the history of the council of *Trent*, that when *Zuinglius* and *OEcolumpadius*, the two chief protestant ministers among the *Swisses*, dyed within a few days of one another, the papists interpreted this to signify God's design to restore their former religion to them, in that he had taken away at once the two great pillars and supports of the protestant cause; upon which the author makes this wise observation: *Certainly, says he, it is a pious thought to attribute the disposal of all events to the providence of God: but to determine to what end these events are directed by that high wisdom, is not far from presumption. Men are so religiously wedded to their own opinions, that they are persuaded, that God loves and favours them, as much as they themselves do. But, says he, the things which happened afterwards, did con-*

fute this presumption ; for the protestant doctrine made a much speedier progress after their death, than it had done before. We think that a cause must needs sink, when some great supports of it are taken away : but God stands in need of no man ; he can raise up new instruments, or carry on his own designs by the weakest and most unlikely means.

5. And *lastly*, It is rashness to determine that those persons, or that part of the community, upon which the judgments of God do particularly fall, are greater sinners than the rest, who are untouch'd by it. And this is the very case our Saviour instanceth here in the text, *Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things ? I tell you, Nay. Or these eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem ? I tell you, Nay.* And this brings me to the

III. Particular I propos'd, which was to shew how unreasonable it is for men to draw any such uncharitable conclusions from the judgments of God upon others, that they are greater sinners than others ; and likewise how foolish it is from hence to take any comfort and encouragement to ourselves, that because we escape those calamities which have befallen others, therefore we are better than they. Our Saviour vehemently denies, that either of these conclusions can justly be made from the remarkable judgments of God, which befall others, and pass by us ; *I tell you, Nay : but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

I. It is very unreasonable for men to draw any such uncharitable conclusions concerning others, that because the judgments of God fall upon them, that therefore they are greater sinners than others. For,

1. What do we know, but that God may inflict those evils upon those particular persons for secret ends and reasons, only known to his own infinite wisdom, and fit to be concealed from us ? What do we know but he may afflict such a person in a remarkable manner, purely in the use of his sovereignty, without any special respect to the sins of such a person, as being greater than the sins of other men ; but yet for some great end, very worthy of his wisdom and goodness ? As for the tryal of such a man's faith, and of his exemplary patience and submission to the will of God, it pleaseth God to set him up for a mark, and to suffer many and sharp arrows to be shot at him, to try whether his faith and patience be proof ; as men set up armour, and shoot at it with a double charge, not with a design to hurt it, but to prove and praise it.

We are assured that the goodness of God is such, that had it not been for sin, we had never known affliction, nor been exercised with it ; but now, that we have all sinned, and upon a common account are all liable to the justice of God, he may single out from this common herd of sinners whom he pleaseth, to smite with his judgments, and for what end he pleaseth : and therefore when God at any time lets fly an arrow at a particular person, this only signifies at the utmost that he is a sinner in general, but no man can from hence with any certainty conclude, that this man is a greater sinner than other men.

And this is very plain from those instances I have had occasion before to mention ; the instance of *Job*, whom God afflicted in a most terrible manner, for the tryal of his faith and patience, and to furnish all ages with a standing and glorious example of so great and necessary a virtue : and from the instance of the man in the gospel that was born blind, concerning whom our Saviour expressly declares, that this judgment did not befall this man for any particular or remarkable sin, which either this man or his parents had been guilty of above others, but that the glorious power of God might be manifested in his miraculous cure, *John ix. 3. Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents : but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

2. What do we know but that God may send these calamities upon some particular persons, in mercy to the generality ; and upon some particular places in a nation, out of kindness to the whole ? When wickedness has overspread a nation, and is grown universal, if out of this herd of sinners, the justice of God please to single out some few persons, and to chase them and hunt them down for terror

to

to the rest, that others *may bear, and fear, and take warning*; this doth not signify that the persons selected for ruin were in a different condition from the rest, or that others had not deserved the like judgments as well as they; it only signifies, that *God remembers mercy in the midst of judgment*, and that he was not willing to destroy them all; that *he does not delight in the death of sinners, but rather that they should turn from their wickedness, and live*. He punisheth a few for example, that others taking warning by it, he may have the opportunity and occasion to spare a great many.

Not but that the hand of God doth sometimes as it were by a finger point at the sin, which it designs to punish: as when remarkable punishments follow visibly upon notorious sins; when the sinner is punished, *flagrante crimine*, in the very act and heat of his sin; when some great and clamorous impiety calls down some more immediate and sudden judgment from heaven; when a sin is punished in its own kind, with a judgment so plainly suited to it, and so pat, that the punishment carries the very mark and signature of the sin upon it; as in the case of *Adonibezek*, who was forced to acknowledge, that *as he had done, so God had requited him*; and as in the known story of *Bajazet*, who having been a cruel and barbarous tyrant, was punished in his own kind, by falling into the hands of *Tamerlane*, who used him with the same insolence and cruelty, which he had exercised towards others.

In such cases as these, men may without uncharitableness conclude, that such a judgment of God was sent upon a particular errand to chastise and punish such a sin: but then in such cases as these, we do not from the judgments inflicted conclude a person guilty of some great sin which we do not know before; but by comparing the sin, which we knew him to be guilty of, with the judgment which was inflicted, we do reasonably collect, that such a judgment was probably sent for such a sin; but generally speaking, no man can with certainty conclude, from the greatness of the judgment that falls upon any one, that such a man was a more grievous sinner than others, who have escaped the same or the like judgments.

II. It is foolish likewise to take any comfort and encouragement to ourselves, that because we have escaped those fore judgments which have befallen others, therefore we are better than they are; for (as I have shewn) these judgments do not necessarily import, that those upon whom they fall, are greater sinners, and that those who escape them are not so: but suppose it true, that they were greater sinners than we are, for any man from hence to take encouragement to himself to continue in sin, is as if from the severe punishment which is inflicted upon a traitor, a man should encourage himself in felony; both these sorts of criminals are by the law in danger of death, only the circumstances of death are in one case more severe and terrible than in the other; but he that from hence encourageth himself in felony, reasons very ill, because he argues against his own life. The only prudent inference that can be made, is not to come within the danger of the law, which punisheth all crimes, tho' not with equal severity.

Thus I have done with the *first* thing I propounded to speak to from these words, *viz.* The wrong use which too many are apt to make of the signal and extraordinary judgments of God upon others. I proceed to the

Second thing I observed in the text, *viz.* The right use we should make of the judgments of God upon others; and that is to reflect upon our own sins, and to repent of them, lest a like or greater judgment overtake us. This our Saviour tells us in the next words, *But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*. As if he had said, there is no reason at all, why ye should conclude from those terrible judgments of God, which have befallen those miserable persons, that they were greater sinners than yourselves, who have for the present escaped those judgments: but instead of censuring others, you should look into yourselves; the most proper reflection to be made upon such occasions, is, that you are liable to the like judgments, your sins have deserved that God's providence should have dealt so with you, as it hath done with *those Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices*; or *with those eighteen persons upon whom the tower in Siloam fell*; and for what reasons soever these judgments of God fell upon them, and passed by you, (which you are not at

all concerned to inquire into) to be sure if you continue impenitent, you have reason to expect the like, or greater ruin.

When we see the judgments of God abroad in the world, and to fall heavily upon particular places and persons, we should argue thus with ourselves: for what reason the holy and wise providence of God hath dealt so severely with others, I know not; whether out of a particular displeasure against them, for some notorious sin committed by them; or whether for a merciful warning to me and others; or for both; it is not for me to pry curiously into the counsels of God, and to wade into the depth of his judgments: but there is one use which I am sure it concerns me nearly to make of it, to look into myself, *to search and try my ways, to repent of my sins, and to forsake them*, lest while I am gazing upon others, I fall into the like or greater calamities. It may be those persons and places which have been so severely visited with the judgments of God, were no more obnoxious to him, than I am; and, when this hath been done to others, in all appearance not guilty of greater sins than I am, what may I not fear, who am in the same condemnation? It may be they were not so great sinners as I am, this should awaken me so much the more to a consideration of my own danger: nay, possibly many of those whom the rod of God hath smitten, were his own dear children. This should startle men most of all: for *if this have been done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?* If this have been the lot of those whom God loves, what shall be the portion of those whom he hates? *If judgment begins at the house of God; where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

The judgments of God, which are executed upon particular places and persons, are designed by him to be so many admonitions to *the inhabitants of the world to learn righteousness*. That fearful ruin which befel *Sodom and Gomorrah*, and the cities about them, was not only intended for the punishment of the inhabitants of those wicked cities; but for a standing example, and a lasting terror to all ages of the world. So St. Jude tells us, *ver. 7. that Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

'Tis the advice of the prophet *Micah*, vi. 9. *Hear ye the rod, and him that hath appointed it.* Every rod of God, every affliction hath a voice, which doth not only speak to the sufferers, but to the spectators also; not only to those who are smitten, but to those who stand by and look on: and if, when God sends judgments upon others, we do not take warning and example by them: if, instead of reflecting upon ourselves, and trying our own ways, we fall a censuring of others; if we will pervert the meaning of God's providences, and will not understand the design and intention of them: then we leave God no other way to awaken us, and to bring us to a consideration of our evil ways, but by pouring down his wrath upon our heads, that so he may convince us to be sinners by the same argument, from whence we have concluded others to be so: or if we continue impenitent, he may ruin us as incorrigible.

And thus I have done with the *second* observation I propounded, *viz.* The right use we ought to make of the judgments of God upon others, which is, to reflect upon ourselves, and to repent of our evil ways, lest the like or greater judgments overtake us. I shall only draw an inference or two from what I have already discoursed upon these *two* heads.

1. Let us adore the judgments of God, and instead of searching into the particular reasons and ends of them, let us say with St. Paul, *Rom. xi. 33. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* If he who was taken up into the third heaven, and had such multitudes of revelations, and was admitted so much nearer to the secrets of God than we are, durst not search into them, how much less should we, who only converse here below?

Let us not then trouble ourselves with nice inquiries into these things; nor one another with mutual censures and uncharitable reflections upon one another: but let us all agree in this, to acknowledge the righteousness of God in all his providences to us and others, *to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, ἀσπαζόμενοι πάντων συμβαίνοντων, to kiss all events of the divine providence*, and to believe, that if we be good, they shall turn to our good. Let us, every one of us, comply with the

open and visible ends of God's judgments upon ourselves and others, which is, *to search and try our ways, and to return unto the Lord*; and for the rest, let us believe that it is best for us, that things are as they are; that *his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.*

2. Let us not be rash in our censures and determinations concerning the judgments of God upon others; let us not wade beyond our depth into the secrets of God: for *Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?* Let us not be hasty and peremptory to pass sentence upon others, because of any evil or calamity that befalls them. We may be as severe to ourselves as we please, this is safe and prudent; but *who art thou that judgest another man's servant?* What our Saviour said in the case of the woman accused of adultery, is very applicable to those who are so forward to censure others, as the causes of God's judgments; *He that is without sin, let him throw the first stone.* If there be any man that is not conscious to himself that ever he offended and provoked God, that man may have leave to lay all the fault of God's judgments upon others.

God hath of late years in his providence towards this nation so ordered his judgments, and they have fallen with so great an equality upon all sorts of men, that we cannot without great rashness fix the cause of them upon any particulars; but however, this does not appertain to us, to pry into the secret reasons of God's dispensations; that which properly belongs to us, is to take off our eyes from others, and to look into ourselves; and if we would do this, we should see reason enough for God's judgments, and great cause to admire his mercy and goodness to us, that he hath been pleased to spare us, when he hath ruined so many others.

So that the proper use of all the judgments of God upon others, is to bring us to a consideration of ourselves and our own ways, and to argue ourselves into repentance. We should reason thus: The judgments of God, which have fallen here and there upon others, were intended for terror to us, and if we still continue impenitent, if we be unreformed by these providences of God, which were purposely designed and intended for our amendment: what can we expect, but that God should also send upon us the like or greater calamities, and that *except we repent, we should all likewise perish.*

I cannot apply these words, as our Saviour does, because as I told you, they are probably a prediction of a particular event to the nation of the *Jews*, in case they continued impenitent; which they did, and this prophecy was afterward sadly fulfilled upon them in the utter ruin and destruction of that nation: but this we may assuredly say, from the warrant of the general tenour of scripture, That if notwithstanding these great judgments of God which have been upon us, and have made such fearful desolations among us, we do not *search and try our ways, and turn to him who hath smitten* others for a warning to us, we have reason to fear, that *we shall suffer in the same manner, or that God will bring some greater temporal judgments upon us, and be angry with us, until he hath consumed us.*

But whatever God may do, as to temporal judgments, this we are as sure of, as the word of God can make us, that there is a sad fate hangs over all impenitent sinners, which however they may escape in this world, will certainly fall upon them in the next. *God hath sworn in his wrath, that such shall not enter into his rest.* He is immutably determined to make such for ever miserable, as by their final obstinacy and impenitency refuse to be happy. And of this terrible doom the judgments here in the text are but an imperfect type and representation. How glad would sinners then be, to suffer only such things as the *Galileans* did! what a favour would they esteem it, to have no worse fate than *those eighteen men, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell!* and to be crushed under the weight of the heaviest rocks and mountains, and there to *lie hid* for ever, *from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!* No, it is a more fearful ruin, a destruction infinitely more terrible, that attends those in another world, who will not repent in this life, even *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* And how great and fearful that is, is not to be expressed in words, nor can we frame any perfect idea of it from any of those pains and sufferings which we are acquainted with in this world: for *Who knows the power of God's anger?* who can conceive the utmost of what omnipotent justice is able to do to sinners?

Nor

Nor have we any reason in the mean time to think, that God will put a stop to temporal judgments; but that if we be not reformed by all those terrible things which our eyes have seen, God will *punish us yet seven times more for our sins*. If we still persist in our atheism and profaneness, in our contempt of God and his worship, in our abominable lusts and impieties; what can we look for, but greater judgments, and a more *fiery indignation* to consume us and our habitations?

Methinks nothing is a sadder presage of greater calamities, and a more fearful ruin yet to befall us, than that we have hitherto been so little reformed by those loud and thick volleys of judgments which have already been thundered out upon us. This was that which at last brought so terrible a destruction upon the *Egyptians*, that they were harden'd under ten plagues. To be impenitent under the judgments of God, which are so mercifully designed to reclaim and reform us, is to poison ourselves with that which was intended for our physick, and by a miraculous kind of obstinacy, to *turn the rods of God into serpents*. *O that we were wise, that we understood this, and that we would consider our latter end.*

T O T H E
R E A D E R.

YOU have here an end of this great Work, and I can now assure you, that I have faithfully discharged what at first I promis'd, which was, to give you these Sermons truly transcribed from the Originals. I have sometimes put two Sermons into one, or three into two, (as the Author used to do in those he printed) and if on that account I have left out repetitions, or shorten'd some things which have been before printed, yet I never alter'd either the words or sense otherwise than was necessary for the connexion; and as I did this purely to make the work more perfect, I hope I have rather oblig'd the Publick, than deserv'd the censure of any.

By these Sermons you have seen how good and useful a preacher the Author was; and tho' the publishing of them was all I had to do, yet that the world may see that he was devout as well as eloquent, I have ventured to annex some of his prayers, with a short discourse to his servants before the receiving of the Sacrament, all written by his own hand. These are no great addition to the work; and will, I hope, be valued by some, or at the worst can only be blamed as the indiscreet zeal, rather than any interest or design of the publisher.

Braisted, in Kent,
Dec. 3, 1703.

Ra. Barker.

P R A Y E R S

P R A Y E R S

Compos'd by

Arch Bishop *TILLOTSON*.

To which is added,

A short DISCOURSE to his Servants before the
SACRAMENT.

A Prayer before the Sermon.

GREAT and glorious Lord God! the High and Holy One, who inhabitest eternity, and dwellest in that light which is not to be approach'd: we pray thee to look down from heaven, the habitation of thy holiness and thy glory, upon us vile and sinful creatures. Have mercy upon us, O Lord! and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all our transgressions: and do thou keep it for ever in the purpose and resolution of our hearts, to serve and fear thee for the future, and to keep all thy commandments always, that it may be well with us, and with our children after us. We pray thee to this end, to write thy law in our hearts, and to put thy fear into our inward parts, that we may never depart from thee.

Grant us the grace of thy Holy Spirit, to become every day better; to reform and amend whatever is amiss in the frame and temper of our minds, or in the course and actions of our lives; to enable us to mortify our lusts, to govern our passions, and to order our whole conversation aright; to assist us to all that is good, and to keep us from all evil, and to preserve us to thy heavenly kingdom.

We pray thee to instruct us in all the particulars of our duty, which we owe to thee and men; that we may herein exercise ourselves always to have consciences void of offence both towards God and towards men; that we may love thee the Lord our God with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our strength; and may love our neighbour as ourselves, and whatever we would that men should do unto us, that we may do likewise unto them. And let the grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, and brings salvation, teach us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we may live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; waiting for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

And we pray thee to make us sensible of our own frailty, of the shortness and uncertainty of this life, and of the eternity of the next; to make us careful so to live, as we shall wish we had done when we come to die: let our loins always be girded about, and our lamps burning, and we ourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.

We pray thee with us to extend thy goodness to the whole world. Let thy way be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Pity and relieve the miseries and afflictions of men; especially those in our neighbour nations, who suffer for thy truth and righteousness sake. Support them, O Lord! under their sufferings; and in thy due time deliver them out of them. Bless thy church; reform whatsoever thou seest to be amiss in the belief and lives of christians, and grant that all those who profess thy name and the holy religion of

of our blessed Saviour, may live as it becomes the gospel, and may depart from all iniquity.

In a particular manner we pray thee to be gracious to these sinful nations to which we are related; to pardon our great and crying sins, to prevent those judgments which our sins have justly deserved, and to spare us according to thy great mercy. In a more especial manner, we pray thee to pour down thy blessings upon thy servant and our sovereign, ———, by thy grace king of *England, Scotland, France, and Ireland*, defender of the faith, and in all causes and over all persons in these his dominions supreme governor. Preserve him in his person; make his government a public blessing to these nations; let religion and righteousness flourish under the influences of it, and let there be abundance of peace in his days. Bless him in his royal relations, ——— and all the royal family. And thou, who art the wise God, and governest all the affairs of the world, be pleased so to bless and direct all public counsels and affairs amongst us, as that they may tend to the advancement of thy glory, the preservation of religion, and the peace and happiness of these kingdoms. Bless, we pray thee, all ranks and orders of men amongst us, and make them all in their several places and stations useful and serviceable to thy glory and to the public good. Bless those to whom thou hast committed the care of instructing and governing thy church, by what titles soever they are distinguished, arch-bishops, bishops, and all others that minister in holy things. We pray thee to make them faithful to that trust which thou hast committed unto them, and to grant that by their diligent labours and prudent carriage, and holy and exemplary lives, they may gain many unto righteousness. Bless the two universities of this land; grant that they may answer the ends of their institution, that religion, and learning, and virtue, may be the glory of those places.

We pray thee to bless us thine unworthy servants, who at this time are assembled and met together in thy name; to be present in the midst of us, and to assist us in the work and service which we are about; and to grant that those truths which shall be delivered to us out of thy word, may have a due effect and influence upon our hearts and lives: all which we humbly beg of thee for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose holy name and words, &c.

A Prayer, which (as the publisher conjectures) he used before his composing his Sermons.

O Lord God of truth, I humbly beseech thee to enlighten my mind by thy holy Spirit, that I may discern the true way to eternal salvation: and to free me from all prejudice and passion, from every corrupt affection and interest that may either blind or seduce me in my search after it.

Make me impartial in my inquiry after truth, and ready, whenever it is discovered to me, to receive it in the love of it, to obey it from the heart, and to practise it in my life, and to continue steadfast in the profession of it to the end of my days.

I perfectly resign myself, O Lord, to thy conduct and direction, in confidence that thy mercy and goodness is such, that thou wilt not suffer those who sincerely desire to know the truth, and rely upon thy guidance, finally to miscarry.

And if in any thing which concerns the true worship and service of thee my God, and the everlasting happiness of my soul, I am in any error and mistake, I earnestly beg of thee to convince me of it, and to lead me into the way of truth; and to confirm and establish me in it daily more and more.

And I beseech thee, O Lord, always to preserve in me a great compassion and sincere charity towards those that are in error, and ignorance of thy truth; beseeching

seeching thee to take pity on them, and to bring them to the knowledge of it, that they may be saved.

And because our blessed Saviour hath promised, that all that do his will shall know his doctrine: Grant, O Lord, that I may never knowingly offend thee in any thing, or neglect to do what I know to be thy will and my duty.

Grant, O heavenly Father, these my humble and hearty requests, for his sake, who is the way, the truth, and the life, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Prayers used by Him the Day before his Consecration.

MAY 30, 1691. *the day before my consecration to the Archbiskopruck, which was on Whitsunday, at St. Mary-le-bow, when, on Whitsunday eve, I retired to Edmonton, to spend that day in fasting and prayer, to implore the blessing of Almighty God upon that action, and the assistance of his grace and Holy Spirit to be vouchsafed to his sinful and unworthy servant, whom his wise providence, and the importunate desire of their majesties, king William and queen Mary, the best of princes, (whom God in great mercy to a most sinful and perverse people hath by a most signal providence set upon the throne of these kingdoms, and sent (I trust) to be our deliverers and benefactors for many generations yet to come) have called to the government and conduct of this miserable distracted church in a very difficult and dangerous time.*

I began with a short prayer to Almighty God to prepare my heart for the duty of this day, and to assist me in the discharge of it in such a manner as might be acceptable in his sight, thro' Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer.

I proceeded next to a thanksgiving to Almighty God for his mercy and goodness to me in the conduct of my whole life, from my first entrance into the world to this day, which was to this effect.

Almighty and eternal Lord God, and most merciful Father, I prostrate myself before thee this day, in a most humble and thankful acknowledgement of thy great mercy and goodness vouchsafed to me a sinful creature, and thy most unprofitable servant (not worthy to be called thy son) in the conduct of my whole life, from my first coming into the world to this present day.

And in the first place I desire to bless thy great and glorious name, that I was born of honest and religious parents, tho' of a low and obscure condition. *Who am I, O Lord God, or what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O Lord God!* 1 Chron. xvii. 16, 17.

I bless thee likewise for all the happy circumstances of my birth and education; that I was born in a time and place wherein thy true religion was preached and professed. I bless thee for the great care of my good parents to bring me up in the knowledge and fear of thee, the only true God, and of him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ, whom to know is eternal life; and I bless thee, my Lord, for him in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed, whom, in the fulness of time, thou wast pleased to send into the world to be the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind.

I bless thee that thou wast pleased to give my ever-honoured and good father the heart to give me, out of the small estate thou gavest him, so liberal an education, whereby I was put into a capacity to serve thee. Forgive, I beseech thee, O Lord, that I have made no better use of the talents and opportunities wherewith thou hast entrusted me, and accept of that little which by thy grace I have been enabled sincerely to do for thee. I bless thee, O Lord, for the continual and bountiful support of thy providence, whereby thou hast also enabled me to return to my parents and their children the kindness I received from them, and to be still as a father to them. I bless thee that thou hast so mercifully and so many times preserved me from the great dangers to which my life was exposed; and from temptations which would have been too hard for me, if thy grace had not prevented them,

them, and kept me from falling into them : This, O Lord, I acknowledge as one of the great blessings of my life, for which I desire continually to magnify thy great and glorious name.

I bless thee likewise, O Lord ! for that measure of health which I have enjoyed, and for my recovery from a great and dangerous sickness ; for any happy endowments of mind ; for that degree of understanding which thou hast given me ; and for preserving it to me, when my dear mother, for so many years of her life, lost the use and enjoyment of it, and might have derived that unhappiness to me her child, if thy merciful goodness had not prevented it. Forgive me, O Lord ! that I have made no better use of the faculties which thou hast endow'd me withal, for thy glory, and the benefit and advantage of others.

Blessed be thy name, likewise, that thou hast at any time of my life, and in any measure, rendered me useful to any good purpose. I acknowledge it to be all from thee ; and I desire to return the praise of all to thee my great and constant benefactor.

Blessed be God for the favour thou hast given me with men both of low and high condition ; and the friends which thou hast raised up for me, to preserve me from the malice of mine enemies, and those who *bate me without a cause, and not for any fault of mine* toward them. O Lord thou knowest.

More especially I bless thee for that great and undeserved favour which I have found in the eyes of our excellent king and queen. Give me, O Lord, the heart, and, if it be thy will, the opportunity to serve them in some measure to answer their favours to me, and the good opinion they have conceiv'd of me, by rendering me useful and instrumental for the public good of this distracted kingdom and church, in endeavouring to heal and reconcile our unhappy differences, and to reform the disorders that are in thy church, and the lives and manners both of the ministers and people.

Finally, I bless thee for all the favours and blessings of my life both spiritual and temporal, so plentifully bestowed upon me ; and above all, for a sincere desire to serve and please thee, my most gracious and merciful God, and to do good to men made after thine image.

Accept, O Lord ! this my hearty sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which I offer up to thy divine majesty, thro' the merits and mediation of *Jesus Christ*, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen, Amen.*

Next I made this humble and penitent confession of my sins, and earnest supplication for the pardon and forgiveness of them.

I bow myself before thee, most holy and gracious Lord God, in a deep sense of mine own vileness and sinfulness, which render me altogether unworthy of the least of those many favours and blessings wherewith thou hast been pleased to follow me all the days of my life. I am a sinful man, O Lord, and not worthy to lift up mine eyes to thee, my God. My whole life hath been little else but a continued course of disobedience, of unthankfulness, and unworthy returns to thee for all thy benefits. I have *gone astray from the womb*, and have grievously transgressed thy holy laws and commandments, in thought, word, and deed.

I desire now to confess my sins to thee, and with great shame and contrition to bewail and lament them in thy presence. *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son, so that if thou be strict to mark iniquity, O Lord ! who can stand ? Lord, I am vile, what shall I answer thee ? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

I confess the folly of my childhood, and the great sins and vanities of my youth, and the many great provocations, which in the course of my life I have been often, too often guilty of ; the impurities of my heart, and the many evil actions of my life, which *thou, O Lord ! knowest altogether* ; and for which I desire to take shame to myself, and to be confounded before thee at the remembrance of them. *Lord, they are all in thy sight, and the most secret sins of my life in the light of thy countenance. I am ashamed, O my God, and blush to lift up mine eyes to thee, my God.*

I confess likewise before thee, that I have most grievously omitted and neglected my duty to thee, in not making better use of the talents and opportuni-

ties

ties of doing good, which thou hast entrusted me withal. I have offended grievously, and been wanting to my duty in a great part of my life; towards those whom thou hast committed to my charge, in not instructing them, and watching over them as I ought, to inform them in the good knowledge of God; and to improve in other knowledge, as was my duty to have done. Lord, forgive this great and heinous sin.

I have offended against thee by anger and impatience upon many occasions; by neglecting to cultivate my mind, and to govern my passions; by uncharitableness and evil-speaking; and especially by mispending my precious time, which might have been employed to excellent purposes. Lord, what can I say unto thee for these and innumerable other provocations of my life? *But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.* Lord, let *thy goodness*, which I have had such plentiful experience of, *lead me to repentance, not to be repented of.*

Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all my transgressions, for thy mercy in Jesus Christ, whom thou hast set forth to be propitious by his blood for the sins of the whole world.

I do now, O Lord, in a deep sense of my sinfulness, and a hearty contrition for all my faults of omission and commission which I have been guilty of, humble myself before thee, and earnestly implore thy mercy and forgiveness. I do not only repent of all the evils of my past life, but am now fully resolved by thy grace utterly to forsake them, and break off the practice of them; and do most heartily beg the assistance of thy grace to make good this holy resolution for the remaining part of my life. *Create in me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me;* and do thou keep it for ever in the purpose and resolution of my heart, to make good what I have now so solemnly promised to thee; suffer me not to turn again to sin and folly: but let thy grace continually preserve me, and enable me to do better; and *let not sin have any more dominion over me, that I should serve it in the lust of it.*

Grant this, O merciful Father, for the sake of my blessed Saviour and Redeemer, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and now sitteth at thy right hand to make intercession for sinners: In his name and mediation I offer up this act of repentance, and these my humble supplications for pardon and forgiveness, for thy grace and assistance, concluding all in his comprehensive prayer: *Our Father, &c.*

Next a prayer for God's blessing upon me, and his; and his Holy Spirit to be conferred upon me in the solemn dedication of me the day following to this high and holy office.

Almighty and most merciful Lord God, *the giver of every good and perfect gift, and the father of lights*, who hast promised, that *if any man lack wisdom, he shall ask it of thee, who givest to all liberally, and upbraidest not, and it shall be given him;* I most humbly beseech thee in the solemn action of the day following, wherein I thy servant am to be dedicated, and set apart to the service of thee, and thy church, in so high and holy an office, to shed forth upon me, thy most unworthy servant, the gifts and graces of thy Holy Spirit in a plentiful measure.

And since by thine own wise and good providence, and the importunate desire of those whom thou hast set in authority over us, I am called to the government and conduct of this miserably distracted and divided church, in so very difficult and dangerous a time, be pleased of thine infinite mercy and goodness to thy sinful and most unworthy servant, to afford him the grace and assistance of thy Holy Spirit, to enable him so to discharge the office which thou hast called him to, that thy name may be glorified, and this church, which thou hast committed to his charge, may be edified in faith and holiness, in love, peace and union, by his diligent and faithful care and endeavours; grant to him such a degree of health, such a vigour of mind, and such a measure of thy heavenly grace and wisdom, as may fit him to be an useful pastor of thy church. Give me, O Lord, a mind *after thine own heart*, that I may *delight to do thy will, O my God*, and let *thy law be written in my heart.* Give me courage and resolution to do my duty, and a heart to *spend myself, and to be spent* in thy service, and in doing all the good that possibly I can the few remaining days of my pilgrimage here on earth.

I have

I have had great experience of thy great mercy and goodness to me all my days :
Psal. 27. *Hide not thy face from me in this needful time. Thou hast been my help ; leave me not,*
9, 11. *nor forsake me, O God of my salvation ; teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a*
Psal. 38. *plain path, because of mine enemies. In thee, O Lord, do I hope ; thou wilt bear, O*
15, 16. *Lord my God ; hear me, lest otherwise mine enemies should rejoice over me, and when my*
foot slippeth, they should magnify themselves against me. Deliver me, O my God, out of
the hand of the wicked, out of the hands of unrighteous and cruel men : for thou art my
hope, O Lord God, thou hast been my trust from my youth, by thee have I been holden
up from the womb ; my praise shall be continually of thee. I am as a wonder unto
many ; but thou art my strong refuge. Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me
not, when my strength faileth. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto
have I declared thy wondrous works : now also when I am old and gray-beaded, forsake
me not, until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to them that
are to come. Hear me, O Lord, for thy mercy's sake in Jesus Christ, my blessed Savi-
our and Redeemer. Amen.

Then I read the prayers in the consecration-office. I concluded with a prayer for the king and queen, and a short ejaculation.

O Lord and heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, and Lord of lords, the only ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth, most heartily I beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign lord and lady, king *William* and queen *Mary* ; endue them with all those graces and virtues which may fit them for that high station wherein thou hast placed them ; give them *wisdom and understanding to go in and out before this great people*, and a heart *to seek their good all the days of their lives* : and make them great examples of piety and virtue to an evil and degenerate age. Preserve them in their persons, govern their counsels, and prosper their forces by sea and land, and make them victorious over their enemies. Be pleased to take the person of the king into thy particular providence. Give thy angels charge over him to keep him in all his ways ; cover his head in the day of battle ; and crown him with victory and good success. Give courage and resolution to him, and to his armies and fleets, and take away the hearts of his enemies. Scatter the people that delight in war ; shew thyself, thou judge of the earth, and render a reward to the proud. Let not iniquity always triumph in the oppression of thy people. Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end ; but do thou establish the just.

I beseech thee to bless and strengthen the queen, to whom thou hast now committed the care and government of these nations. Give her wisdom and resolution for such a time as this. Discover and defeat all the designs of wicked and unreasonable men against the persons of their majesties, and against our peace and religion, and turn their counsels into foolishness. Strike through the loins of those that rise up against that happy government, which thy signal providence hath established among us. O Lord, bless them both (if it be thy blessed will) with a hopeful issue to sit upon the throne after them, and to be a blessing to these nations for many generations. This O Lord, is not impossible with thee. Have a gracious regard, I beseech thee, to the humble condition of the queen thy servant, and make her that was barren to sing, and to become a joyful mother of children. Hear my prayer, O Lord, in this behalf, for thy mercy's sake in Jesus Christ. Amen.

And now, O Lord, I humbly beseech thee to accept of these my praises and thanksgivings, which I have humbly offered to thy divine majesty ! of my humiliation and repentance for all the sins of my life ; and of my resolution of a better obedience for the future, and to enable me by thy grace to make them good. Hear likewise my prayers and supplications for thy blessing upon the solemn action of the day following, and upon thine unworthy servant who is to be dedicated to thy service ; and for them whom thou hast set over us ; and for these sinful nations ; and all for the sake of thy dearly beloved Son, in whom thou art well pleased, even Jesus Christ, the righteous ;

In whose name and words I conclude my prayers,

Our Father, &c.

*A Discourse to his Servants, concerning receiving
the Sacrament.*

—NOW that I have mentioned the sacrament, I have a great desire, that as many of you as can should receive it at *Easter*, and that you should carefully prepare yourselves for it against that time. It is the most solemn institution of our religion, and as we are christians, we are obliged to the frequent receiving of it, and we cannot neglect it without a great contempt of our blessed Saviour and his religion. He hath appointed it for a solemn remembrance of his great love to us, in laying down his life for us, and therefore he commands us *to do it in remembrance of him*; and St. Paul tells us, that *as often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we do shew forth the Lord's death till he come.*

Both the comfort and the benefit of it are great. The comfort of it; because it does not only represent to us the exceeding love of our Saviour, in giving his body to be broken, and his blood to be shed for us; but it likewise seals to us all those blessings and benefits which are purchased and procured for us by his death and passion; the pardon of sins; and power against sin.

The benefit of it is also great; because hereby we are confirmed in goodness, and our resolutions of better obedience are strengthen'd; and the grace of God's Holy Spirit to enable us to do his will is hereby conveyed to us.

And the best preparation for it is by a sincere repentance for all our sins and miscarriages, which we remember ourselves to be at any time guilty of: by daily prayer to God that he would give us a sincere repentance for all our sins, and mercifully forgive them to us; and by a sincere and firm resolution to forsake our sins, and to do better for the future; to be more careful of all our actions, and more constant in prayer to God for his grace to enable us to keep his commandments: by being in charity with all men; and by forgiving those who have injured us by word or deed, as we hope for forgiveness from God.

And let none of us say, that we are not fitted and prepared for it. It is our duty to be so: and if we be not prepared to receive the sacrament, we are not qualified for the mercy of God, and for his forgiveness; we are not prepared for the happiness of heaven, and can have no hopes to come thither: but if we prepare ourselves as well as we can by repentance, and resolutions of being better, and by praying heartily and earnestly to God for his grace, he will accept of this preparation, and will give us the comfort of this holy sacrament.

A Form

A Form of PRAYERS, used by his late Majesty
K. *William* III. when he received the Holy Sacra-
ment, and on other occasions.

J O H N ix. 4.

*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh,
when no man can work.*

C O L O S. iii. 17.

*Whatsoever ye do in word, or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving
thanks to God and the Father by him.*

*A prayer to God, that he would be pleased to assist and accept my prepara-
tion to receive the Blessed Sacrament.*

I Prostrate my self before thee, my most gracious God and merciful Father, in
an humble acknowledgement of my unworthiness and insufficiency of myself,
for any thing that is good. I am sensible that without thee I can do nothing; and
therefore do humbly implore thy gracious assistance, and acceptance of my en-
deavour to prepare myself for the worthy receiving of the blessed sacrament of the
body and blood of thy dear Son.

Stir up, I beseech thee, such pious affections and dispositions in my soul, and fill
my mind with such holy meditations as are suitable to this occasion. Grant me such
a sense of my sins, and of the sufferings of my blessed Saviour for them, as may af-
fect my heart with a deep sorrow for my sins, and an eternal hatred and displeasure
against them, and may effectually engage me to love and live to him who dy'd for
me, Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

*A penitent confession of sins, with an humble supplication for mercy and
forgiveness.*

MOST gracious and merciful God, who art of purer eyes than to behold ini-
quity: I desire to humble my soul before thee, in a deep sense of my own vile-
ness and unworthiness, by reason of the many sins and provocations which I have
been guilty of against thy divine majesty; by thought, word and deed. Forgive,
O Lord, all the sins and follies of my life, which have been many and great; and
which I do now with shame and sorrow confess and bewail before thee for thy mer-
cies sake in Jesus Christ. Pardon, O my God, my manifold neglects and omissions,
and slight and careless performance of the duties of religion, without due affection and
attention of mind; that I have not served thee with that purity of intention, with that
sincerity of heart, with that fervency of spirit, with that zeal for thy glory, with that
care and diligence, and constancy, that I ought.

Forgive, O Lord, my sins of ignorance and infirmity, which are more than can
be numbered; but especially all my wilful transgressions of thy holy and righteous
laws;

laws, the impurity of my heart and thoughts, all irregular appetites and passions, and every sinful and wicked practice, of what nature or kind soever. More particularly, I do with great shame and confusion of face, confess and lament before thee, from whom nothing is hid, that I have grievously offended. * These my transgressions, with many more, which I cannot remember and reckon up before thee, are all in thy sight, O Lord, and my most secret sins in the light of thy countenance. When I look back upon the errors and miscarriages of my past life, and consider with myself what I have done, and what I deserve at thy hands, my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments. I am ashamed, O my God, and blush to lift up mine eyes to thee, my God. Lord, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

* Here he was used to mention Particulars.

Make me deeply sensible of the great evil of my sins, and work in me a hearty contrition for them; and let the sense of them be more grievous to me than of any other evil whatsoever. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and according to thy tender mercies forgive all my transgressions, for the sake of my blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

A Prayer for the Grace and Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, to enable me to resolve and to do better for the future.

AND now, O Lord, in confidence of thy great mercy and goodness to all that are truly penitent, and sincerely resolve to do better, I most humbly implore the grace and assistance of thy Holy Spirit, to enable me to become every day better, and to reform whatever has been amiss in the temper and disposition of my mind, or in any of the actions of my life. Grant me the wisdom and understanding to know my duty, and the heart and will to do it. Vouchsafe to me the continual presence and direction, the assistance and comforts of thy Holy spirit; whereby I may be disposed and enabled to do thy will with delight and cheerfulness, and with patience and contentedness to submit to it in all things. Endue me, O Lord, with the true fear and love of thee, and with a prudent zeal for thy glory. Encrease in me more and more the graces of charity and meekness, of truth, and justice, and fidelity; give me humility and patience, and a firmness of spirit to bear every condition with constancy and equality of mind.

Enable me, O Lord, by thy grace to govern all my appetites, and every inordinate lust and passion, by temperance and purity, and meekness of wisdom; setting thee always before me, that I may not sin against thee. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me; purify my soul from all evil thoughts and inclinations, from all bad intentions and designs. Deliver me, O Lord, from pride and vanity, from immoderate self-love, and obstinate self-will, and from all malice and envy, and ill-will towards any.

Make me to love thee as I ought, above all things; and let the interest of thy honour and glory be ever dearer to me than my own will, or reputation, or any temporal advantage whatsoever.

Subdue in me the evil spirit of wrath and revenge, and dispose my heart patiently to bear reproaches and wrongs, and to be ready not only to forgive, but to return good for evil.

Assist me, O Lord, more especially in the faithful and conscientious discharge of the duties of that high station in which thou hast placed me: And grant that I may employ all that power and authority which thou hast invested me with, for thy glory and the publick good; that I may rule over men in thy fear, with justice and equity, ever studying and endeavouring the good of the people committed to my charge, and as much as in me lies the peace and prosperity, the welfare and happiness of mankind.

Confirm me, O my God, in all these holy resolutions; and do thou keep it for ever in the purpose of my heart, to perform them to the utmost of my power: all which I humbly beg for thy mercies sake in Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

An humble intercession with God for all mankind; for the whole christian church, and more particularly for that part of it which is planted in these kingdoms; for the Queen, and for all under our government; for my relations and friends; for my native country, and for my allies, &c.

I Thine unworthy servant desire likewise humbly to intercede with thee, the God and Father of all, for all mankind; that thou wouldest be pleased to have compassion upon their blindness and ignorance, their gross errors and their wicked practices. Send forth, I beseech thee, thy light and thy truth, to scatter that thick darkness which covers the nations, and overspreads so great a part of the world; that thy way may be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations.

Bless and preserve thy church dispersed over the face of the earth, restore to it unity and concord, in the acknowledgement of the truth, and the practice of righteousness and goodness. Remove out of it all errors and corruptions, all offences and scandals, all divisions and dissensions, all tyranny and usurpation over the minds and consciences of men, that they who profess the same faith, may no longer persecute and destroy one another, but may be kind and tender-hearted one towards another, as it becomes brethren, and those that are heirs of the same common salvation.

I beseech thee more especially, to be merciful to that part of thy church, which thou hast planted in these kingdoms. Pity the distractions, and heal the breaches of it. Purge out of it all impiety and profaneness; take away those mistakes, and mutual exasperations, which cause so much distemper and disturbance; and restore to it piety and virtue, peace and charity. Endue the pastors and governors of it with the spirit of true religion and goodness, and make them zealous and diligent to promote it in those who are under their instruction and care. Give them wisdom to discern the best and most proper means of composing the differences of this miserably divided church, the heart to endeavour it, and by thy blessing upon their endeavours the happiness to effect it.

And I beseech thee, O Lord, of thy great goodness, to bless all my relations and friends; particularly my dearest consort the queen. I acknowledge thy special providence in bringing us together, and thereby giving me the opportunity and means of being instrumental in rescuing these nations from misery and ruin. And as thou hast been pleased to unite us in the nearest relation; so I beseech thee to preserve and continue that entire love and affection between us, which becomes that relation. And if it be thy blessed will, and thou seest it best for us, bless us with children, to sit upon the throne of these kingdoms, and to be a blessing to them for many generations.

Be merciful also, O God, to my native country; let true religion and righteousness be established among them, as the surest foundation of their peace and prosperity.

Bless all my allies: O righteous Lord, that lovest righteousness, and hatest falsehood and wrong, do thou stand by us in the maintenance of that just cause in which we are engaged, and bless us with union and good success.

And in thy good time, O Lord, restore peace to christendom; put an end to those bloody wars and desolations, wherewith it hath been so long and so miserably harra's'd: and, when thou seest it best and fittest, manifest thy glorious justice in giving check to that ambition and cruelty, which hath been the cause of so great calamities, to so great a part of the world. O God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself: Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth, and render a reward to the proud: Scatter the people that delight in war: Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but do thou establish the just.

Be merciful, O God, to all that are in affliction or distress, that labour under poverty, or persecution, or captivity; under bodily pains and diseases, or under temptation and trouble of mind: Be pleased to support and comfort them, and in thy due time to deliver them according to thy great mercy.

Forgive,

Forgive, I beseech thee, most merciful Father, to all mine enemies all their malice and ill-will towards me ; and give them repentance and better minds : which I heartily beg of thee for them, as I myself hope for mercy and forgiveness at thy hands, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, my most merciful God and Saviour.

A thankful acknowledgement of the Mercies of GOD both Temporal and Spiritual ; and above all for the redemption of mankind by the humiliation and sufferings of his Son in our nature.

Blessed and glorious Lord God, the great creator, and preserver, and governor of all things ; my Saviour and deliverer, and continual benefactor : I acknowledge, I admire, I adore thy infinite excellencies and perfections : and let all the creatures in heaven and earth say, *Amen.*

I Render thanks to thee, most gracious God, for innumerable favours conferred upon me thy poor creature, and most unworthy ; for my being, for my reason, and for all other endowments and faculties of soul and body ; for thy continual care and watchful providence over me from the beginning of my life, and thro' the whole course of it : for all the happy circumstances of my birth and education : for the pious care of my dear and ever-honoured mother, and grandmother, and of all others who had the charge of me in my tender years : for thy unwearied patience towards me, after so many and so great provocations : and for thy merciful and wonderful preservation of me from innumerable dangers and deaths, to which I have been exposed all my life. I will still hope in thy goodness, O Lord, who hast been my trust from my youth ; by thee have I been holden up from the womb, my praise shall be continually of thee. Above all I adore thy tender mercy and compassion to me and all mankind, in sending thy only Son into the world to redeem us from sin and misery, and by suffering in our nature, and dying in our stead, to purchase for us eternal life. I bless thee for the light of the glorious gospel, for the knowledge and sense of my duty towards thee ; for delivering me from temptations too hard for me, and supporting me under many : for the direction, and assistance, and comforts of thy Holy Spirit : for restraining me by thy grace, and reclaiming me from the ways of sin and vanity ; and for all the gracious communications of thy goodness, whereby thou hast inclined my heart to love and fear thee, and enabled me in any measure to do thy will.

For these and all other thy blessings and favours to me, which are more than can be number'd, I render unto thee, most gracious God, all possible praise and thanks by Jesus Christ, my blessed Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

A Prayer to God, to prepare my heart for the worthy receiving of the Holy Sacrament, and to make me partaker of the blessings and benefits of it.

I Come to thee, O my Lord God, from whom are the preparation of the heart, and the good disposition of our minds for thy worship and service. Fit me, O Lord, by hearty contrition for my sins, and a sincere resolution of a better course, to approach thy altar. Accept of the expiation which thy Son hath made of all my transgressions by the sacrifice of himself, as of a lamb without spot and blemish. Let the remembrance of my sins, and of his bitter sufferings for them, pierce my very heart, and engage me for ever to love and serve him, who laid down his life for me. Cleanse me, O Lord, from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that I may be a meet guest for thy holy table, and a real partaker of those blessings and benefits

fits which are represented in the sacrament of Christ's body and blood. Strengthen, O God, all good resolutions in me; enable me, by thy grace, faithfully to perform the conditions of that covenant which I made in baptism, and intend to renew in the holy sacrament, by dedicating myself entirely, and for ever to the service of my blessed Redeemer, who hath loved me, and washed me from my sins in his own blood. To him be all honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, love and obedience, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Short Meditations and Ejaculations at the Communion.

Before the Minister begins the Service.

I Lift up my soul to thee, my God, humbly imploring thy blessing upon me, and gracious assistance of me in the holy action I am now about. Forgive my want of due preparation, and accept of my sincere desire to perform an acceptable service to thee, through Jesus Christ.

Before the receiving of the bread.

Lord, I am not worthy of the crumbs which fall from thy table.

After the receiving of it.

Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend. Herein hath God commended his love to us, that whilst we were enemies, he gave his Son to die for us.

Before the receiving of the cup.

What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? I will take the cup of salvation, and I will bless the name of the Lord.

After the receiving of it.

Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift, his dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

After the conclusion of the whole action

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases: who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

A Prayer to be used in private afterwards.

I praise and magnify thy great and glorious name, O Lord my God, for the blessed opportunity afforded to me this day, of commemorating thy infinite goodness and mercy to me and all mankind, in sending thy only Son into the world to take our nature upon him, to submit to the infirmities and miseries of it, to live amongst us, and to die for us: and to preserve the memory of this great love and goodness of thine to us for ever in our hearts, that thou hast been pleased to appoint the blessed sacrament, for a solemn remembrance of it. Grant, O Lord, that I may faithfully keep and perform that holy covenant which I have this day so solemnly renewed and confirmed in thy presence, and at thy table. Let it be an eternal obligation upon me

me of perpetual love and obedience to thee. Let nothing seem hard for me to do, or grievous for me to suffer for thy sake, who whilst I was a Sinner, and an Enemy to thee, lovedst me at such a rate as never any Man did his Friend.

Grant that by this Sacrament there may be conveyed to my Soul new spiritual life and strength, and such a measure of thy Grace and Assistance, as may enable me to a greater care of my Duty for the future: That I may henceforth live as becomes the Redeemed of the Lord; even to him who died for my sins, and rose again for my justification, and is now sat down on the right hand of the Throne of God, to make intercession for me: In his holy Name and Words I conclude my imperfect Prayers.

OUR Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that have trespassed against us. And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil: For thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever. Amen.

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